

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

SP-24

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

SP-24

**Standing Committee on
Social Policy**

Building Transit Faster Act, 2020

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 9 June 2020

**Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Loi de 2020
sur la construction plus rapide
de transport en commun

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 9 juin 2020

Chair: Natalia Kusendova
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

Présidente : Natalia Kusendova
Greffière : Tonia Grannum

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et de l'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1710-9477

CONTENTS

Tuesday 9 June 2020

| | |
|--|--------|
| Building Transit Faster Act, 2020, Bill 171, Ms. Mulroney / Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun, projet de loi 171, Mme Mulroney | SP-577 |
| Mr. Fotis Kanteres | SP-577 |
| Mr. Richard Worzel | SP-581 |
| Ms. Amanda Bankier | SP-585 |
| Ms. Stephanie Bogle | SP-588 |
| Pape Area Concerned Citizens for Transit..... | SP-592 |
| Mr. Richard Sigesmund | |
| Mr. Haixiang Chu..... | SP-596 |
| Mr. Jimmy Gray | SP-599 |
| Ms. Joyce Hall..... | SP-601 |
| Ms. B.J. Danylchuk..... | SP-605 |
| Ms. Claudia Mio | SP-608 |
| Mr. Laird McMurray..... | SP-612 |
| Mr. Greg Gray..... | SP-615 |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL POLICY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE**

Tuesday 9 June 2020

Mardi 9 juin 2020

The committee met at 1000 in room 151 and by video conference.

BUILDING TRANSIT FASTER ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

**SUR LA CONSTRUCTION PLUS RAPIDE
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN**

Consideration 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 Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order. We are meeting to conduct public hearings on Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts. Today's proceedings will be available on the Legislative Assembly's website and television channel.

We have the following members in the room: We have MPP Bell, we have MPP Babikian and we have myself. The following members are participating remotely. May I please ask that MPP Sabawy introduce himself and state which city he is currently in?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Hi, this is Sheref Sabawy, MPP for Mississauga–Erin Mills. I am in Mississauga.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you. MPP Harden, please introduce yourself.

Mr. Joel Harden: Good morning, Chair. MPP Harden here from Algonquin territory here in Ottawa. It's nice to see everyone.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Good morning. MPP Tabuns?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Good morning. I'm from the Toronto–Danforth riding, and I'm here in Toronto this morning.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Good morning. We're also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, interpretation, and broadcast and recording.

The other members who are present electronically are MPP Blais, MPP Karahalios, MPP Martin, MPP Thanigasalam and MPP Hogarth.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before you

begin to speak. Since it could take a little time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning. As always, all comments by members and witnesses should go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin?

MR. FOTIS KANTERES

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Seeing that there are no questions, I would like to welcome our first presenter of the day, Fotis Kanteres. Good morning.

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: Good morning.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): You have 10 minutes for your presentation. You may begin by stating your name for the record.

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: Thank you very much. My name is Fotis Kanteres. First, I'd like to thank everyone for attending. Thank you for having this hearing in these extenuating circumstances, of course. I'm going to proceed.

First, I'm going to introduce myself. I'm going to bring up some key points and try to use this time well. I'm a stakeholder of the community of Toronto–Danforth, we'll say. My home is actually in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Ontario Line.

There are a lot of thoughts with this, and I'm happy to be here to contribute to this bill, using even the language of "faster." First, I'd like to say that I'm absolutely pro-transit. This is a project—I guess in the maybe decades of time that we've been connected with the community, there has been talk of there being some type of transit going up Pape, going up to the north. The relief line is one common title of it. So we've always expected something maybe to happen, even though it seemed like a pipe dream.

However, in the last year or so, there has been a lot of chatter, talk, movement and—

Interruption.

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: Sorry, I lost you guys. Okay.

The thing is with how this has happened and how it's happening is it's been so quick, which on the one hand is maybe appreciated that there is movement, but there has been an immense amount of non-information and communication and engagement. So that's maybe the premise of where I'm coming from on this.

The house is inhabited by my elderly mother. When the term "expropriation" comes up, in a sense, there's no price that would be able to buy her off. She's really happy there;

she has her memories with her deceased husband, my father.

Reading the bill and the way the process has been going to this point, it has happened so quick and it hasn't seemed that there's been a manner in which to engage. There has been this sort of uploading or downloading of forms of engagement. I appreciate that this is happening right now, but in trying to speak with Metrolinx—they've been generous during their presentations and that's appreciated, but they didn't really have much information. It seems like a lot of what has been happening has been done with very little information, very quickly. So the premise of building transit faster, on one hand, is appreciated, and also, in governance, you're obviously trying to balance a lot of factors.

In project management, there's a principle of fast, cheap and good: You can have two but not three. What I think is kind of happening here is, there may be a trade-off for democratic rights, engagement, and ability to engage in discourse. And when there's a notion such as expropriation, which is one of the most powerful tools of governance that may take away the rights of a citizen—namely, their home—that's obviously a major cause for attention and concern.

I want to go over a few points here in the specifics of the bill. One of the aspects, to my understanding, is removal of hearings and the mechanisms for expropriation and expediting of certain processes. It also seems that there's a high amount of power and, I guess, decision-making ability by Metrolinx. My concern about that is, they're not elected officials. They're not representing the municipality or the region. It's seemingly a high power allotment, and in the wording of how conflicts are resolved, it says that "powers ... may be delegated to Metrolinx or to prescribed public bodies." Now, there are public bodies such as the Legislature, our elected officials, and we have the Toronto municipal government. I would prefer that there be clear language on this.

The recommendations—I have a list that I'm going to get to shortly—basically concern having mechanisms in place and a structure in place where citizens such as myself can engage in potential disputes or concerns, be it environmental or this notion of the permitting process, which is also peculiar to me: that permits would then be submitted or obtained via Metrolinx as opposed to the regular structures that are in place via the local government.

I appreciate that you want to expedite it, and that's commendable in a sense, but I'm also very concerned that the trade-off may be unequal. You can do things quickly. You can do them tomorrow, but that doesn't mean you're going to do them correctly. What you're trying to balance here is speed, but at what cost? Are you costing people their democratic rights, their civic rights? And what is being given in this process?

I think the premise of this bill is concerning, and I would want it to incorporate—I don't even like the title of it: "faster." It could be "better"—build it better, build it more correctly. There are other ways to approach it, and it doesn't have to undermine the speed of it. I appreciate that the idea is to try to expedite it, but again, at what cost?

The considerations that I'm going to read off quickly in my last few minutes would be—these are just general points: a community benefits agreement for all projects; more published information via Metrolinx. If anything, if you're going to have Metrolinx have this much power, I would rather see it integrated more into governance, have more accountability. Again, I've met with people and they're very appreciative, they're very open, the few I've spoken with, but there weren't that many people, so it didn't seem like the organization itself was developed enough and integrated enough with the smaller communities around it. That's a high concentration of power basically in an unelected group. So I would want to see more integration, to expand it, but then I also see a duplication or a redundancy if you're going to do that when these organizations may already exist at other levels of government.

1010

I'm going to continue with the list here with my last minute or so: consultation with the community for standards for construction impacts; consequences for failures; the Minister of Transportation and Metrolinx to establish a construction working group, with local stakeholders to be included in this for advice during construction; coordinate with the city of Toronto for construction permits and work orders; Metrolinx cannot exercise power under Bill 171 just by itself—it needs to be in coordination with local stakeholders and the municipal government; compensate the municipality for construction damages for the BIA; and be mindful of how much power Metrolinx has to operate without municipal input.

My main areas have to go back to the expropriation and the elimination of hearings. I'm not against expropriation. It's obviously a necessity for a project of this scope, scale and magnitude; the question is the execution of it. There's obviously a select group that's going to be more affected than others, and other people are going to gain. We're trying to balance that. But it is important to remember that we're all citizens and we're all stakeholders that are being affected by some of these costs.

I think I've been a good amount of time. Again, I really wish to thank everyone for doing this.

Finally, the fact that we're able to do this via this Zoom set-up and that we're in these incredible times—I have a public health background. This is something that is going to be more common, very likely. Because of this—and sure, we have to pause to breathe and make sure our audio is correct, but that's going to get better—I don't see a reason why these components couldn't be built into this type of project. The fact that I could, via a few emails, set myself up to communicate with yourselves—which I greatly appreciate—I think should be integrated into projects moving forward so that there is an ability to give direct input and engagement with Metrolinx or yourselves. I think that that needs to be put into the legislation to structure it accordingly in this modern sense. So if we can communicate this quickly, that's very powerful, but we should also be mindful not to expedite solely because we don't want to deal with something. These hearings, as you all know—

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much, Mr. Kanteres. That wraps up our 10-minute allotted time.

We will now begin with seven minutes of questions by members of the government. I see MPP Hogarth. Go ahead.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good morning. Do you mind if I call you Fotis? Okay. Thank you for your community advocacy. Yesterday, we heard a lot of people from the communities, and it's so important. Even today when we talk about what's going on with COVID, how people just gather together and they just want to see what's best for their community—and in your case, it's where your mom lives, so obviously it's very important and near and dear to your heart.

One thing we have learned is that Metrolinx needs to communicate a little bit better with the communities right across the board on this. As I had commented yesterday, we do have the parliamentary assistant to the minister here on the video screen with us, and I know he'll be taking those messages back.

When it comes to consultation, this is a process where we want to engage the community. We do really want to work with the community. I'm not sure if you are aware, but there is a website called www.metrolinx.com/ontarioline. Have you seen that website?

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: Yes, I've been following it since probably its inception, because obviously Metrolinx has existed as a website for a long time, and this has come up since the Ontario Line was deemed the Ontario Line. All of this, of course, is within less than a year. Engaging with the website and engaging with Metrolinx: The challenge of that website is that it's quite paltry in its actual substantial information. It's more a broad overview and brush-strokes which are, I guess, repeating the original political talking points.

Speaking with Metrolinx themselves, they actually provided much further depth than the website. That was interesting because the website could reach far, far more people than just an individual in a conversation. They were very generous with the way they communicated—also careful, because they couldn't go into any details that they weren't aware of, etc. I think that the website itself would benefit from further depth, because that's only going to promote further engagement and quell misunderstanding, because these projects and change can be alarming. They don't have to be, because even if it's a point of expropriating my house, if I know this in a fair amount of time and I can take appropriate action—it doesn't have to be, "Oh, this will never happen." If anything, if we have enough information and data, we can engage and find a potentially amicable outcome.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: We also agree with that. I think that's part of the process. Now, Metrolinx isn't given all the authority. This bill here, what it does—and I thank you for being pro-transit, and I know as a person who lives in downtown Toronto, like yourself, transit has been long overdue, getting from A to B. If you travel around the world, people have world-class transit systems, and ours

is so dated. I'm so pleased that we were able to come to this agreement with the city to be able to finally get a project moving forward without the re-dos and "let's do more consultation"—not consultation; I do want to do more consultation—but do more—you know what I mean. Every different level of government seems to change the plan.

So we have a plan, we have an agreement and we have a plan, moving forward. Part of that plan is consultation with the community. Metrolinx is the main body that will have some authority. Now, that authority will be delegated by the Minister of Transportation. They don't just get to go and do what they wish. They still have a body that governs them and they also have to speak with the people in the community. One thing we want to make sure is those communications are open.

We've asked Metrolinx to conduct some research activity such as public open houses—obviously, today, that's a tough thing to do, just in the light of COVID. But pop-ups—they'll be having a shop right in the community, so you'll be able to have those conversations one-on-one. We do want that consultation process to be fulsome.

One thing I've learned in this job is that everyone has different levels of information. You have a lot of information, but your neighbour might not have any. They have to be willing to engage at all different levels, information levels, because some people don't even know this might be happening; others may. Maybe you can share some more ideas of how we can talk and how we can make these consultations more fulsome.

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: Thank you, MPP, for your supportive commentary. I'm going to work backwards to respond to your question. Yes, there's definitely asymmetrical information and will for engagement. Not everybody is—I don't know how many people submitted to be here, but I'm here. I think that there's always going to be a balance, with people requiring an opportunity to engage. Something like this is very helpful because it's far more accessible. If I were in a position of inaccessibility, I could be here, as I am, by having a computer, I guess, at my home. So I think you need to provide more opportunities for that.

In terms of the open houses, I understand that there is a legislative process and protocol. However, the world is always changing. There's YouTube, there are ways to broadcast widely, and I think that those should be taken into consideration immediately and utilized—period.

In terms of the first things you were saying about multiple transit plans over the years, I absolutely agree with you. In my relatively shorter lifespan, I can vividly remember Transit City, something that was in the works for several, several years. I believe the plans were basically ready to be implemented, and if I recall correctly, it would have been the Ford brothers who were in power at the municipality here who basically tore them up and stopped them. So, absolutely, these plans are developed, brought really close to fruition, and then there are changes in government. It reminds me of my time in Latin America where every governmental change would throw everything out and then seemingly start at the beginning, which

is kind of an insane, redundant use of and waste of resources and people's time and lives, and delaying all future productivity.

In terms of the minister delegating to Metrolinx and them having more power and then having further delegations, yes, that's well and good, and that's the way Ontario is structured, but that's not necessarily—

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much, Mr. Kanteres. That concludes the time we have. We will now be moving on to the official opposition, beginning with Mr. Tabuns.

1020

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much. I appreciate that, Chair. Mr. Kanteres, thank you very much for joining us this morning. I appreciate your commentary and I appreciate you talking about the impacts on the neighbourhood.

In regard to MPP Hogarth's promise—no. I'm mischaracterizing. I apologize, MPP Hogarth. The suggestion that Metrolinx will be setting up a community office to provide information to people: I don't know about you, but I heard about this last September, October, that a community office would be opening in January of this year. It is now June, and no sign of such office has so far been detected.

It leads me to this question: You're clearly not happy with the level of communication that you've had with Metrolinx, notwithstanding the ability to access their website. Would you say that that lack of communication, or the feeling about that lack of communication, is general within the community that you live in?

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: Thank you. Yes, I would agree with that. There is actually, I would say, widespread non-understanding. Most people don't even know what's happening. There's regular work for, say, electrical lines on the roads. People just kind of think that's what's happening, and then there are other people coming and doing drill tests.

Metrolinx, as I said, were very personable in person, but in terms of the materials that they have publicly accessible—I've tried calling them; I've emailed them, with non-responses. When I speak with them personally I'm able to go in-depth into a conversation, to the point where they can't answer questions because there hasn't been enough time and work done. That's kind of an insane—I don't want to go that far with it. It's normal, natural. But when you're putting in all these things, it seems like it's the cart before the horse, because you're saying you're going to do all this stuff and expedite, but you don't even know what you're doing. There has to be some balance in this.

If there was a slightly more concrete or tangible plan, then they would have something to talk about and we can engage with. But if we're going right ahead and expediting this whole process, eliminating hearings and engagement, you're just pushing it all through, but we don't even know what that is. That's extremely troubling, and I think it's promoting confusion, ignorance and political disengagement, because people then have the idea governments are going to do whatever they want.

The thing is, this is a multi-year project. This may not even be completed in our lifetimes, because it's a super-

project. They take so long. It requires some type of sustainable continuum to go throughout these time periods.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Kanteres, thank you very much. That was a very thorough response. I'm going to yield the floor to my colleagues.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): MPP Bell?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Mr. Kanteres, for coming in and speaking about your situation today. How you've described Metrolinx and its treatment of residents is something that many witnesses raised yesterday. This is my question to you: How do you want Metrolinx to treat you and your neighbours?

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: You can all hear me, I believe. Number one, I want them to treat us like everyone wants to be treated: with respect. Now, it is always proportional and behooves one in one's position, so if you have an immense amount of power you should also have an immense amount of respect and appreciation and gratitude because you are public servants. The more power, influence and oversight you have, the more respect you should have. That's characterized via things such as engagement access.

Mr. Tabuns is my member of Parliament. I'm able to communicate with him. I'm sure he's a very busy person—as I'm sure all of you are—but that's what happens when you work these jobs. They're sometimes thankless and very difficult, but this is going to affect people for generations and it's going to potentially change the city at its very DNA. This has ramifications globally, frankly. We're going to be this beacon for the world.

Metrolinx has to act accordingly. Maybe you have to make it bigger and you have to make more adjustments, but I don't think it's about that; I think it's about integrating with systems that already exist. We don't need to get too redundant. It needs to be more accessible, and maybe it needs more fuel of information, so there needs to be more research and data so they have something to engage with rather than "I don't know" and seemingly dragging their heels on putting more information on the website. I can't blame them if they don't have anything to say, but there has to be some accountability. I think that this whole notion of "faster" is maybe putting a lot of hot air out, which is expanding the concept, but there's not enough substance there.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to give my time to MPP Harden.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Mr. Kanteres. I'm coming to you from Ottawa. There are two people serving on this committee today who bear experience that we want to be sharing with you today.

We understand that this legislation is impacting big transit projects in the GTA, but we've just undergone a light rail project here in Ottawa—it cost over \$2 billion—which is essentially non-functional. A big reason it's non-functional is because we put trust in a private consortium to put a train into place in a Nordic city, perhaps the coldest city in the world at many times, and it failed.

You spoke about expropriation and about your fear for your family's home. I'm wondering if you might also be concerned: Should that power of expropriation be delegated to a private entity which would construct something, with all your sacrifice, that wouldn't work, how would that make you feel?

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: I am trying to be here with respect, so I'm not going to say how it would actually make me feel, but I'm going to say that it would feel horrible. Beyond that, I think it's unconscionable and unjust and it should be illegal.

All of these works—everyone has to employ someone, but when you do super-projects—this stuff has been researched for decades around the world. We can go to the Big Dig in Boston. We can talk about the project that just happened. We can look at Brazil. There are so many examples, and—

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. My apologies. We are out of time.

We now will be proceeding to six minutes of questions by our independent Liberal member, Mr. Blais. Go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much, Mr. Kanteres, for your presentation and for your commitment to advocacy on behalf of your community. Certainly, as Mr. Harden was referring to, there have been some challenges in Ottawa. I'm not sure I would relate them all back to the model that was used to build the project. But Mr. Kanteres, in your estimation, what are three concrete things that Metrolinx could do to improve their public engagement with you specifically but also the community that you call home?

Mr. Fotis Kanteres: Thank you for that question. Immediately what comes to my mind is—a common way of communicating is obviously online via the website. What I would appreciate is if there was more dedication to communication in a concrete manner. Right now, it's somewhat labyrinthine and maybe even Kafkaesque dealing with Metrolinx. I don't know exactly who to deal with, even though I've actually met some of these people. Again, they were very personable and I appreciate it, but when I go to the website or when I contact them, it seems to be this general-help-email type of thing. I don't really feel like I'm going to get a response. I would appreciate if there was a protocol in place where there's a general means of communication and then there is a response. The response thing doesn't have to be complete and answer all of my questions, because it may not be possible. But the structuring in place is very important.

I guess, secondly or thirdly, I just think that for the amount of power that is had by this organization, there should be more prominence or presence in the communities. It shouldn't just be a single office outpost that may or may not have opened that's underneath a transit station that's being built that may not be there six months from now. For the amount of power, there should be a building in downtown Toronto or Ottawa. There should just be a lot more visibility out there. I want to be careful not to advocate just buying a new building, but my point is that this should be something that people can know about and

have steps and means to access, if that answers your question.

1030

Oh, actually, and last—because you said “three things.” I would also promote continued forums such as this, because we can't obviously meet in an open house, but I found the open house they did have at the Estonian House, I believe, on Broadview very helpful and very informative. Of course, there's a balance of resources there, but I think the online forum provides ample opportunities. Thank you.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for that. I certainly agree that more engagement is better and presence within the community is better. I think that's one of the drawbacks from the particular way in which the government is doing these projects. But thank you very much for your presentation today. I look forward to seeing you again, perhaps sometime in the future.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. As a reminder, if you wish to submit anything in writing, you can do so by the deadline, which is 6 p.m. on June 10.

MR. RICHARD WORZEL

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now be moving on to our next presenter, Richard Worzel. Good morning. Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Richard Worzel: Good morning.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): You will have 10 minutes for your presentation, and you may begin by stating your name for the record.

Mr. Richard Worzel: My name is Richard Worzel. I live at 466 Pape Avenue, one block north of the Pape school. I'd like to thank the chair and committee for hearing me. It seems as if the issues embodied in Bill 171 are divisive, but I submit that everybody here and almost everybody involved agrees on the basics. Everybody wants more transit for Toronto. We want it as quickly as possible and we want costs to be contained.

I'm going to try to use multimedia if I can, so bear with me while I get it started. For Metrolinx to accomplish these three things in the building of the Ontario Line, it must be accountable, responsible and fair. I will explain these in more detail in a moment, but first, I want to say that, based on my own direct experience, Metrolinx has proven that they cannot be trusted to achieve any of these three things.

I lived within three blocks of Yonge and Eglinton from the start of the Eglinton LRT until 2016, when my wife and I moved to Pape Avenue—bad timing. I saw first-hand that Metrolinx needs more effective oversight than the McGuinty government provided at the start of that project. I'm going to use a video to illustrate my point.

Video presentation.

Mr. Richard Worzel: And just to show this is not an isolated interview, here are some other clips from other media: “It's a Mess”: Scarborough Businesses Struggling As Eglinton LRT Construction Drags On”; “Toronto

Neighbourhood Has Had Enough of Construction Causing Pedestrian Nightmare”; and from the same article, “In fact, Eglinton Avenue East has been named the worst road in Ontario thanks exclusively to its ongoing transit construction nightmare.” That was by the CAA, in 2019. And, of course, councillors and MPPs are regularly being called with complaints about what’s going on.

You may have noticed during the CTV clip the narrow sidewalk hemmed in by construction. It’s clear that this is terribly harmful to the businesses next to it. Moreover, this was Eglinton on the east side of Yonge. During the winter of 2015-16, Eglinton on the west side was even worse: The south sidewalk was closed. Meanwhile, the sidewalk on the north side was open, but there was no paving. We had to walk on dirt or mud, and the walkway was less than six feet wide. The only thing separating us from traffic was a line of orange cones. Metrolinx has made this whole project a much-prolonged nightmare for anyone unfortunate enough to be in its path.

Now, let’s look at the cost overruns. In December of 2018, Ontario Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk “cited Metrolinx’s decision to sign what’s called an alternative financing and procurement ... contract with the consortium tasked with building” the “LRT. Such contracts typically include a premium for the private-sector partners assuming the risks of cost overruns and delays. But according to Lysyk, under this contract, Metrolinx had to pay the consortium \$237 million” more “in 2018 to ensure the project still meets its September 2021 target date.”

That \$237 million is money that should have been spent on other transit projects in Toronto or on worthwhile projects elsewhere in the province. Instead, taxpayers had to bail out Metrolinx because of its inability to monitor and manage its contractors. Worse, Metrolinx agreed to pay this extortion to ensure the project was completed by the already delayed September 2021 date. And yet, the completion date has again been pushed back, this time to May 2022.

Meanwhile, Metrolinx has alienated the surrounding community with its high-handed, arrogant behaviour to the point where the community fights it at every turn and regularly petitions for elected provincial and city representatives to intervene. This is embarrassing for elected officials from both the province and the city, as it represents a failure of government oversight and planning.

It is clear that Metrolinx cannot be trusted to deliver the Ontario Line in a responsible and timely fashion. Here is what I would recommend we do about it:

Metrolinx must be required to be accountable. It must be held accountable on a day-to-day basis for time, cost and damage. It should be monitored by a full-time auditing team that reports directly to the Auditor General of Ontario. And as an aside, this would be a great way of making sure that there weren’t big, nasty stories that came out about Metrolinx during the Auditor General’s annual report to the Legislature.

All contractors must be required to co-operate fully with the auditing team, as one of the terms of any agreement.

On-site auditors would produce regular public reviews of what’s happening, in clear, accessible language, as opposed to the bafflegab that Metrolinx publishes on a regular basis.

Metrolinx must be responsible. Businesses and residents will have to accept disruption during the construction, but in turn, Metrolinx must be required to make one of its top two or three priorities to minimize damage and inconvenience to the neighbourhood.

Metrolinx must also plan and prepare to finish construction in the shortest possible period.

Metrolinx must be fair. It must be fair to businesses and residents along the route. If local businesses and residents are being asked to put up with inconvenience, noise and mess during construction, then Metrolinx must make good on any damage it does to offices, dwellings, public parks, public buildings or streets and make restitutions for loss of business due to construction, as determined by the on-site auditors in conjunction with local BIAs.

It must be fair to Ontario taxpayers, inside and outside of Toronto, who get tired of hearing that even more money is being funnelled into the city because of Metrolinx’s incompetence. Finally, it must be fair to MPPs and city councillors, who wind up holding the bag for screw-ups not of their making.

1040

As a businessman, Metrolinx offends me because they seem unable to stay on time and within budget.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): One minute remaining.

Mr. Richard Worzel: Thank you. They have lost control over their contractors and subcontractors, they inflict unnecessary harm on the businesses and residents in their path, and they don’t take responsibility for the problems they create. As a resident, they offend me because they don’t care about damage and inconvenience they cause. They view residents and local businesses as nuisances and brush off their concerns. As a taxpayer and voter, they offend me because they squander money that could be used more profitably elsewhere, either inside or outside of Toronto.

To sum up, Metrolinx must be accountable, responsible and fair, but it has shown that it will not be any of these three things if you do not force them to be so. The result will be the kind of mess that the Eglinton LRT has been and remains.

This ends my presentation. I’d be happy to take questions.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We will begin our questions today with seven minutes by the official opposition. MPP Tabuns.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Worzel, for coming in this morning. I appreciate the presentation.

You have said or you’ve implied in your presentation that Metrolinx is arrogant. They have tried to slough off residents and local businesses and tried to avoid real communication. You’ve given some examples, but could you expand on why you’re saying that to us?

Mr. Richard Worzel: Sorry. My microphone was muted.

Two things: first of all, the so-called information meetings that happened over last winter. I was aware of two of them in my area. They had some exhibits that didn't really provide any firm information. They didn't make a formal presentation and, mostly, they avoided answering questions.

We also got conflicting information from different people with Metrolinx. One person said, for example, that southbound trains would come out at Pape and run over ground from there. Another said it would emerge near Gerrard, which is a kilometre south of that point. Since I live just north of the Pape school, the difference makes a big difference to me. My wife spoke to someone from Metrolinx on the phone who said that he had no idea where it would come out. So it would be nice if they had a clear message.

We had workers show up outside of our house without any announcement in mid-April. They started blocking traffic and drilling holes in the road. We had no idea what they were doing. My wife spent half a day phoning around, starting with the city, trying to find out who these people were and what their authority was. After half a day, she wound up speaking with somebody at Metrolinx, who said that he had no idea who they were but he would check and call her back. He did; he called her back and said, "Oh, yes, those are subcontractors working for us. They're taking soil samples." We said, "Why are they taking soil samples? The TTC has already done that, done the same thing, blocking roads." He said, "Well, these are supplementary information soil samples." We asked why there was no notification. He said that there should have been.

Two and a half weeks later, we got a printed notification backdated to before they started, indicating that they were going to be doing drilling in our area. We think that they basically don't care what they say to the people in the area, and as long as nobody squeals, they just let it ride.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much for that. Chair, I yield the floor to my colleagues.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Mr. Worzel. I have to tell you, as an MPP for Ottawa Centre, that a lot of what you say has great resonance with us up here. You talked about the follies and missed targets of the alternative financing model, what we call here the public-private partnership model, which built our light rail transit system. My colleague MPP Blais, who is on this call, said this morning that he wouldn't identify that as being the source of the problems. Inspired by you, Mr. Worzel, I would beg to differ.

I know for a fact—just so you're aware, and you have some comparative analysis to make your case in the greater Toronto area. There is one consultant firm called Boxfish, with connections to the Liberal Party, whose principal, Mr. Brian Guest, earned a contract in the construction of our LRT of \$2 million. It just so happened that his brother-in-law, Chris Swail, happened to work in a management capacity for our transit system. This is what happens. I would submit to you, sir, inspired by what you

said, that when we allow consortiums to make major infrastructure projects, not only do we not have a proper LRT built but consultants with deep ties to the Liberal Party—and to my friend, perhaps Mr. Blais, I would love to know from him if this is the case—have basically built a non-functional transit system.

I'm asking you, Mr. Worzel, if you could help us understand, from your experience of what you've seen with the Eglinton project, why we need to keep these projects in public hands with appropriate accountability to make sure the taxpayers' money is not wasted.

Mr. Richard Worzel: You're really asking me a question that I'm not sure I'm entirely equipped to answer. I don't think I'd go as far as to say that PPP can't work. The problem is that I haven't seen a convincing example of where it does work.

There are problems both ways. If you have a PPP, there's always a profit motive built in, and that creates some tension because, on the one hand, they're going to want to do things as quickly and as shoddily as possible to maximize their profit. On the other hand, they're going to try to be efficient. So if there's proper accountability, it can work. The question becomes: Does the profit involved negate the benefits? That's an analysis that I have not seen done. To be honest, I haven't spent a lot of time looking at it. I've also seen problems with publicly funded and managed projects.

I think it really comes down to: However it's done, it needs to be properly managed; it needs to be accountable and responsible to whomever has oversight. I wouldn't leave the oversight to a political committee; I would make it an independent body such as the Auditor General.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you very much. I take your point. But would you want a construction project in your city where the brother-in-law was involved in hiring a consultant to set in place the key infrastructure elements of it? Would that pass muster for you as a business person? That's my question to you.

Mr. Richard Worzel: No, absolutely not. Cronyism has no place at the public trough. The fact that it happens doesn't excuse it. I would be very uncomfortable if a major project was awarded on the basis of ties rather than performance. I think that's what you're getting at.

What we really need to do is to make sure that this amount of money has been awarded purely on the basis of the merits of the proposal and the bona fides of the contractors to make sure that they can deliver.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Chair. I'd just like my colleague MPP Bell to have the remainder of the time.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for coming, Mr. Worzel. I don't have time to ask a question, but I am curious about any proposed amendments you have to make Metrolinx more accountable, responsible and fair, and I encourage you to contact me afterwards so that we can factor them in. Thank you very much.

Mr. Richard Worzel: Certainly. If the Clerk could make sure that I have contact information for you—I don't at the moment—I will do that.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you. We will now be moving on to six minutes of questions by our independent Liberal member, Mr. Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much, Mr. Worzel, for your presentation this morning. Much of what you talk about in your presentation is about how the challenges that have been faced so far seem to come down to management processes and not necessarily legislative aspects. I think you mentioned some kind of committee, your oversight committee—you thought, maybe through the Auditor General. What other management practice changes would you like to see Metrolinx make to improve that, whether it's the relationship with the community or the outcomes that they produce for it?

Mr. Richard Worzel: I think the most important thing that I would suggest is—and by the way, I would suggest an *[inaudible]* auditor's full *[inaudible]* devoted to nothing but the *[inaudible]* money involved. It would certainly warrant that. But I think that the key aspect of accountability is communication and reporting. For Metrolinx to come out every nine months or so and say, "Oops, we're late again, and it's going to cost more money again": That's not being accountable and that's not being responsible.

I think they should be required, or someone should be required—and I actually don't think it should be Metrolinx; I think it should be an independent body overseeing Metrolinx, like an auditor, who should come out with plain language, concise reports saying, "This is where we are."

1050

The best reports of all would be the ones that say, "Nothing new. We're still on time. We're still on budget." But if something happens, then we would know it immediately or soon, like regularly, once a month or once a quarter, rather than having to wait for the big surprise reveal: "Oops, we're over budget. Sorry about that." So I think reporting and having to say in public what's happening is the single biggest step that we could do to hold Metrolinx accountable for what's going on.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Would you think that reporting back to some legislative committee would be appropriate from time to time to help guide—or at least help bring transparency and sunlight to that?

Mr. Richard Worzel: Yes, I think it should be reported to a legislative committee, but I don't think it should stop there. It shouldn't be private to the committee. I think it should be publicly available at the same time. I think the reports should come through the Auditor General's office so that it is seen to be independent and not subject to the—let's face it; parties come and parties go. Sometimes you'll form the government; sometimes you won't. But a project like this is likely to outlive at least one government and probably two—maybe more if we're unlucky.

We need to have a system that is not based on reporting to a political party in place but reporting to an independent body, such as the Auditor General, while reporting to legislative committees, because obviously the power ultimately comes from the Legislature.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I agree that the Auditor General maintains, obviously, independence but also the respect of

the public as a result of that. That's one of the reasons why in Ottawa we asked the Auditor General to do a pre-audit of both the construction process and the contract, as well as a post-audit of delivery. The results that the Auditor General gave us were very favourable.

Thank you very much for your time this morning.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now be moving on to seven minutes of questions by members of the government. MPP Martin, go ahead.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Worzel, for your presentation. I also read the submission that you gave us in writing, which had some of the same points. It was all very informative and I found it very business-like. I see you're a CFA, so it doesn't surprise.

I'm the MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence currently, so I am certainly aware of the issues along Eglinton that have been going on since, I think, 2011 and the problems that that has posed for the community. You should know that the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation is on this committee, Mr. Thanigasalam, and he is taking notes and listening. I know that the minister, who I spoke with last night, is also listening to what's going on at the committee and will be reading the submissions and what people have had to say. I think that's important to know. We're all learning in this process, and we want to make things go well.

As you pointed out, everyone agrees on the basics: more transit, as quick as possible, contain the cost. I think everyone also agrees that Metrolinx should be held accountable and should be responsible and fair.

The purpose of this bill, really, is to speed up the construction and planning parts of the four priority transit projects. The bill itself doesn't really have an impact on overall governance or oversight of Metrolinx. What it is trying to do, as I said, is to shorten the time frame.

I noticed, of all the newspaper articles and media that you put up, a common refrain was that Metrolinx had made things on Eglinton and other places a "prolonged nightmare"—I think that was one quote—and that at the Prohibition Gastrohouse, the sign on their door said it was a never-ending LRT project. In Scarborough, they also said that the construction drags on. So really, one thing we're trying to do to be fair to everybody is to shorten the time frames in any way that we can that makes sense from a business-savvy point of view: Can we coordinate utility relocations, and things like that.

I just wanted to give this preamble because that's certainly what we are intending. The bill itself really is more about speeding up the time frames. The accountability in consultations with Metrolinx is extremely important, and we want them to do a much better job than they have been doing. There certainly are oversight mechanisms in place and accountabilities. The question is how to improve that. That isn't really in the bill, but it is something that is important to making the projects go well.

I was interested to hear your suggestions, which I guess we have in writing as well, and we have the recording of this. Just any other suggestions you have because of your

business background—you have a lot to bring to the table from that point of view.

Mr. Richard Worzel: Yes, in fact there's one point that I'd like to make. I understand that we're trying to move this along as quickly as possible, and I think that's great. But my concern is, I would rather that Metrolinx and the Legislature spend an additional year thinking and planning about this, rather than jumping into any kind of construction, any disruption of the neighbourhood before they have a clear plan of what they're going to do and how it's going to be done.

Paula Fletcher, my city councillor, I think put it very well yesterday when she said that it's important to measure twice and cut once. I would rather that Metrolinx spend more time planning so that they can compress the actual construction time into as tight a window as possible. I don't want them to jump in quickly and start things and then find, "Oops, we didn't want to do that. We actually wanted to do this instead."

I think it's important that they think carefully. And as a businessman—I work in strategic planning—I say it's very important that before you start spending money, you have to spend as much time as necessary to plan carefully before you start the clock. I think it's critical in this case that you do so, because it's not just the money; it's not just the delays; you're also screwing with peoples' lives and businesses along the route.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you for that comment. Yes, I think that goes without saying. It's important to get the planning right, and everybody wants to make that happen. What this bill specifically deals with is things that are happening during construction, like utility relocation coordination, corridor permits coordination. Now I'm drawing a blank with some of the other things. But it specifically deals with some of these things to make it better as we go along, so that we're not held up five months at a time for hearings and things like that that we're going to have to carry on with anyway.

So I agree with you: Planning is very important, and it's important that we get it right, and I think everybody wants it done right. Whatever we can do to make the process go smoother is what we're looking for.

As I said, we're all ears for good ideas, and if there's anything else that you want to add or share about suggestive ways of making sure Metrolinx's accountability is improved, I think those suggestions are warmly received.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thirty seconds remaining.

Mrs. Robin Martin: He's got an answer. Unmute him.

Mr. Richard Worzel: Yes, I think if Metrolinx knows that they're going to have to repair any damage and offer restitution for damages or loss of business, I think they'll be much more aware of the effects that they're having on the people around them. Right now, they just don't care.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Worzel. This concludes the time we have this morning.

Just as a reminder, the deadline to send in written submissions is June 10 at 6 pm.

MS. AMANDA BANKIER

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now be moving on to our next presenter. We have Ms. Amanda Bankier. Good morning. Thank you for joining us. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. You may begin by stating your name for the record.

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Hello, Madam Chair Kusendova and members of the committee. My name is Amanda Bankier. I live at Fontbonne Place, 791 Queen Street East, just west of the Queen Street railway bridge and next to the embankment.

1100

I understand that representatives of Fontbonne Ministries spoke with you yesterday, and I should like to add that in the 17 years I have lived in their building, I have been impressed by the breadth and quality of their outreach ministries. Their provision of rent-g geared-to-income housing for middle-aged single women with health or housing challenges was life-saving for me. I am an insulin-using diabetic who has peripheral neuropathy. This complication causes substantial difficulties with balance, muscular function, dexterity and sense of touch, as well as a type of pain that can only be partially ameliorated by medication. I normally use a wheeled walker. In situations where it cannot be manoeuvred, I can move short distances using two canes. Some of the other residents have equally difficult problems. Most of us are older, and no one here is in a position to pay market rent.

As it stands, our building is in close proximity to the trains on the embankment. I'd like to share a screen now to show you the photograph of—let me see. Sorry, there it is: "share screen." This is a photograph taken in April 2012 and shows what a GO train on the nearest edge of the embankment, on the track nearest the edge, looks like from the second storey when it is passing.

I'd like to move to the next photograph. This was taken from the base of the embankment in the community garden belonging to Fontbonne Place, and shows how large the train looks when you are that close.

We've been able to benefit from the opportunity of gardening in parts of the property, mostly on the side of Strange Street next to the embankment. Two weeks ago, I took a picture of a branch of one of the three University of Saskatchewan cherry bushes that I planted about nine years ago. Behind the flowers you can see a red car, which is parked right up against—there's a fence, but it's basically at the foot of the embankment.

Next photograph: This is looking down Strange Street, from north to south. The lilac bush in the centre is something else I planted. The side of our building shows the dental clinic near the south end, in which the ramp up to its door is less than 10 metres from the embankment.

In a heavily built-up area of the city where it has been planned to run the Ontario Line above ground, there will be great impact on many facilities providing opportunity for recreation and living space for vulnerable populations such as seniors. To carry out the plans, whatever they may finally be, expropriation of green spaces and living spaces will seriously degrade the quality of the communities.

Any errors made in the process would be devastating and expensive. Even the minor work currently being done for soil testing and other factors can lead to unfortunate consequences if it is done without proper communication with residents and municipal government. I intended to take my elderly car to shop for necessary items after I finished the previous measuring and picture taking, but I found the following situation, with materials related to drilling projects obstructing the access to my car parked in a handicapped spot with a clearly visible sign.

To use the car, I need to be able to bring my walker up beside it, which was impossible under the circumstances. Here we can see the walker; I had to lean on the car so the angle isn't very good. This is some of the damage to an iris plant I have had for five years. Just a moment while I unshare this.

Fortunately, I was able to reach out to someone at Fontbonne Ministries who coordinated with the office of our local councillor, Paula Fletcher, who got through to Metrolinx. Once the connection was made, they removed the obstructive items promptly. This emphasizes the importance of providing easily accessible communication to individuals and ensuring the project communicate successfully with local governments. A number of provisions in the bill seem likely to decrease this necessary communication.

There are also serious safety concerns. The Ontario Line trains must travel frequently and rapidly in all weathers to serve the purpose of the subway relief line but, unlike a subway, are likely to fall onto buildings, streets or people if they derail. If effective measures are taken to ensure safety, a great deal of extra expense will be involved, and the claim that the approach of building above ground will be significantly cheaper than the original plan for a subway relief line seems unlikely to be borne out.

The technology for building subways deep underground, although expensive, is well established, and extensive studies and consultation were done for it. I participated in some of the online consultations and was reassured by the determination to check on all the plans before they were implemented. A bill designed to allow extensive parts of construction to proceed before planning is completed is disturbing and will require thought and amendment if it is to avoid important and expensive mistakes.

The bill needs to—sorry, I needed to write something in here because my printer wasn't working. The bill needs to include provisions to improve communications to make contact provisions easy and clear and provide more detail to residents before things start. The city of Toronto and neighbourhood organizations, including business improvement associations, should be consulted and accepted as participants in ongoing works, and standards should be set and made completely clear to contractors to ensure that the impact of the work on residents is minimized.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): You have one minute remaining.

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Thank you. As carpenters know and Mr. Worzel mentioned, the way to avoid

problems is to measure twice and cut once. Knowing all the things that could go wrong with this above ground plan, I wonder why a return to a plan that would not involve using yet another incompatible set of vehicles and running into all kinds of as-yet-unknown problems is not being considered?

I would like to add that before I moved here, I lived for about 15 years at two addresses in Flemington Park. The Ontario Line may provide a single link to downtown transit for that area. However, to effectively improve access for residents of the area as a whole, it will be more important to approve the coordination of buses and other local transit in an area that is heavily fragmented by multiple ravines and the Don Valley.

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

Ms. Amanda Bankier: The parks in these low-lying areas are a beautiful asset—

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

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Thank you.

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

Ms. Amanda Bankier: I'd be happy to add anything people want to know.

1110

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We will now be moving on to six minutes of questions by our independent Liberal member, Mr. Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much, Ms. Bankier, for your presentation this morning. Why don't you go ahead and finish that last thought you were making before you got cut off?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Unfortunately, we have lost our presenter.

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Hello?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Hello.

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Have you got me back?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Yes, welcome back.

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Sorry about that. I wanted to finish that thought with saying that in order to save money and have very effective communication for the Flemington Park area with the downtown transit, a system of setting up lanes for express buses would not only work better for a larger part of the area, but would also be much cheaper. Individual buses are not cheap, but compared with the construction of whole lines, it would not only be cheaper but much faster. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Any more questions, Mr. Blais? Go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thanks, Ms. Bankier, for that. I appreciate that the construction is going to be difficult and there are lots of opinions on the best solution to provide transit etc. But I'm wondering: For you, what would be the best way for those running the project to communicate the efforts they're going to be making as it proceeds, whether it's construction-related issues or other things that they're going to be working on?

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Yes, thank you. Primarily, although many of us—I get emailed things and so on, but many people don't have computer access or email usage. So actually getting out printed materials and getting them not just as a single thing put up on a bulletin board but actually mailed to people would be very helpful. It would be helpful if they were before the work started, and long enough so people could be prepared.

Mr. Stephen Blais: That's wonderful. Thank you for taking time this morning with us, Ms. Bankier.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. Ms. Bankier, we can no longer see you, so I'm not sure if you want to turn on your video once again. But in any case, we will be proceeding to our next round of questions by the government. Mr. Thanigasalam, go ahead.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Ms. Bankier, for your presentation. Thanks for showing us those pictures that were taken from 2012.

As a committee we spoke to Fontbonne Ministries yesterday, with Sister Georgette, Mr. Vozzolo, Leanne Kloppenborg and AnnMarie. We had a good discussion with Fontbonne Ministries as well. They did express their concerns—very, very similar to yours; but from your perspective, it's different. You've been living there as a resident of Fontbonne Place—again, showing those important pictures, like plants or the car that you drove. It gives us a good perspective, so I want to thank you for using this technology to show all these pictures to us.

Also, you mentioned that the communication piece is something that you wanted to happen. You said that Queen Street is somewhere you're very familiar with. One of the main plans for Metrolinx is to have community engagement and community consultation. That's a key part of Metrolinx's planning and designing process. At this moment, Metrolinx had a community office at 770 Queen Street East, but currently, Metrolinx closed their community office due to COVID. However, Ms. Bankier, there are other means of communication I really would like you to explore. Metrolinx is encouraging residents to sign up for regular newsletter updates. You can sign up at www.metrolinx.com/ontarioline. So I would definitely recommend you sign up for the Metrolinx newsletter.

Obviously, when it comes to community impacts like safety concerns—and you also talked about some provisions in the bill. We will know more about precise environmental and community consideration as the project moves through further design stages, which will inform environmental studies, and we'll work with communities like Fontbonne Place to ensure various measures are in place to address impacts like noise impacts or vibrations.

My question is to Ms. Bankier. Can you please talk about the communication piece? What would you propose to have more free flow of communication between your community and the residents and Metrolinx at this point in time, during COVID?

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Thank you for the information. As far as communication under these difficult circumstances goes, again—you mentioned the newsletter, which is a way to hear from Metrolinx. But it's also, I think, very

important that we are able to express our concerns directly. It would help if someone was specifically assigned to keep communication—probably more than one somebody—with certain areas. It's difficult to see, for example, how the embankment could be expanded where we live without them expropriating our building, and that is not a minor consideration. Even leaving COVID aside, given what the circumstances are right now, there is nowhere for us to go. For people who need rent-geared-to-income housing, there are years of waiting. If you are in need of this for health reasons, you are not going to survive those years.

I appreciate you mentioning an attempt to mitigate noise and vibration, because one of the few things that can help me get through my physical problems and function better is getting good sleep. Since the pain I have makes it fairly difficult for me to sleep, I often can't sleep at night and then have to sleep in the daytime. It is disturbing to think of what it would be like if major construction was going on right next to the building, even if we were lucky enough that the building was still there. So having regular information about this sort of thing and having a phone number or a dedicated email, at least, where we can get in touch with people quickly if there's some sort of problem—I was lucky to know that the people at Fontbonne Ministries would help me get in touch with whom I needed to speak to with the problem I had with those items near my car. But not everybody has that access and that help, so this would be a very useful thing.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We have 30 seconds remaining.

Mr. Thanigasalam, you need to unmute your microphone, please.

1120

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Ms. Bankier, thank you. Metrolinx will be conducting public open houses, community pop-ups, community canvassing and regional town halls for you to have a platform to express your valued and important concerns. They have to do all these important public consultations. As the PA to the Minister of Transportation, I'll make sure that I follow up with Metrolinx on that. Thank you so much for the presentation today, Ms. Bankier.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now be moving on to seven minutes of questions by the official opposition. MPP Tabuns, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ms. Bankier, thank you very much for coming and making a presentation this morning. It's useful for us in our deliberations.

I know that you and I have had a chance to talk before about the consequences of the—what can I say?—either loss of the Fontbonne Ministries housing or the impairment of the quality of the housing such that people would have to move out. I'm not sure the committee fully understands the predicament that the residents would face if in fact that housing was lost. Could you speak to that briefly?

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Sorry for the delay. The unmuting is not the easiest thing that we get to do.

Yes, the residents here are all in need of rent-gear-to-income housing. As you know—everybody knows in Toronto, I think—market-rate housing is very expensive. Anything I have looked at, just out of curiosity—the rent of a small one-bedroom apartment at market rent would be more than my entire monthly income, so clearly this is not an option.

The other problem is that there is also some housing for seniors specifically. I'm 69 years old, so I'm fairly sure I qualify for that, but not everyone here would—some would. But in addition to that difficulty of finding a place, for many of us, the physical problems of moving are great.

When I moved in here, I collapsed for almost two years after the move and was not back to my normal level of function for that period of time—which turned out, actually, the early part of it, to be lucky, because right after I moved here, the original SARS came along. I heard the announcements on the radio saying that there was atypical pneumonia, and I thought, "Well, maybe it's good I'm not getting out at all." Then they started calling it SARS and, as you know, Toronto was the main hot spot in all of North America for that.

It also should have led us to know better what would happen to people in long-term-care homes, which is another concern for those of us who might up temporarily or permanently, if we couldn't find housing elsewhere, in that situation, although we are still capable of taking care of ourselves in a proper, supportive environment, which the people here have provided.

Everyone here would need help to survive the construction. It might be difficult or impossible without a chance to temporarily move somewhere else, trying to move our entire collection of furniture and so on, but just having somewhere to go when the noise was impossible, or the vibration. It's also concerning that vibration might damage the building.

Mostly I try not to think about it, because it is something very difficult. I need to try to avoid stress, which is another thing that very seriously affects the state of my illness, and I know that many other people here also have difficulties with stress, so that's what I know. Of course, other people would be able to speak better about their own problems, but thank you. That's what I can say about that.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Okay. Thank you very much for your answer. I appreciate it.

Chair, I'll pass my time over to my colleagues.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): MPP Bell?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Ms. Bankier, for coming in and expressing your concerns about this issue. It must be very stressful to have so much uncertainty about this project and not know how it's going to impact your home and the home of your neighbours.

This is my question to you: What information are you still wanting from this government and Metrolinx?

Ms. Amanda Bankier: Thank you. I would like to know if there is any flexibility at all in their determination to build something through a heavily built-up area that will cut it in half and lead to a great deal of loss and disruption. What we have heard so far is an absolute determination

not to consider other options, which does seem odd to me given that there was a well-advanced plan that was thrown out for this which would have provided the same or better access for people without—after all, if you're going on a subway and then can transfer to another subway train, that is a lot easier than transferring to what I understand are smaller trains in a completely different sort of environment.

It seems to me that it would make sense to consider whether this whole idea may not have caused more trouble than it's worth. Certainly, we've already seen in other projects that working above ground is not actually cheap. The idea that faster and cheaper will be the result of this approach does seem odd to me.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for your answer. I'll make sure to follow up with you around some of your concerns, with MPP Tabuns, and maybe we can direct some of your questions and concerns to the assistant minister for transportation.

I'd like to hand over the rest of my time to MPP Harden.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Unfortunately, we are out of time. Thank you very much, Ms. Bankier, for your presentation today.

MS. STEPHANIE BOGLE

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now be moving on to our next presenter, Ms. Stephanie Bogle. Welcome.

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you for joining us today. You will have 10 minutes for your presentation, and you may begin by stating your name for the record.

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: My name is Stephanie Bogle and I live at 226 Victor Avenue. I want to thank the committee for giving me this opportunity to speak today. I have lived at 226 Victor Avenue in South Riverdale near Carlaw and Gerrard for 25 years.

South Riverdale is a multicultural neighbourhood, and most people have lived a long time in our part of Victor Avenue. Through the years, I have been asked to be a spokesman or advocate on issues which have affected our neighbourhood, as some do not feel that they speak English well enough to voice their opinions, so today I am speaking for myself and for those who do not feel that they have a voice to protest and raise objections against Bill 171 and the building of the Ontario subway line through South Riverdale and Leslieville.

First of all, in my opinion, this Bill 171 is draconian in its intention and draft, as it denies the rights of we, the citizens, and property owners. How is it possible, in the Canadian legislative system, that such a bill is allowed to be drawn up when it actually conflicts with our Canadian Charter of Rights? It denies us, absolutely—I read it—the right of a citizen to object. In my opinion, the whole Ontario Line project has been bulldozed by Premier Doug

Ford with no consideration or understanding of our Leslieville and Riverdale neighbourhoods and the environmental consequences of this project.

Despite Councillor Paula Fletcher's and MPP Peter Tabuns's objections, no one has listened to our concerns about these projects which will disturb our neighbourhoods. Riverdale and Leslieville are unique in Toronto, with their historic old houses, large oak trees and green parks, and interesting European and multicultural small businesses.

South Riverdale house owners like myself have lived a long time in South Riverdale and invested their life savings in their houses by renovating their houses and creating a beautiful family neighbourhood. It is an oasis from noisy downtown Toronto.

1130

Leslieville has become rejuvenated with the influx of young families buying houses and renovating, and has a growing shopping area. New houses have been also been built around Gerrard Avenue and Dundas and Logan in the style of the old houses. This Ontario Line project will decimate Leslieville and South Riverdale, destroying homes and green areas and the original beauty of these neighbourhoods.

The Ontario Line plans show they are not building this subway on a major street, like Eglinton—which is a mess—or Yonge Street, but plowing through a quiet residential area and destroying parks and green areas in their wake.

For me and all my neighbours, noise pollution is a major factor in objecting to this project, which will ruin the quiet peace of our neighbourhood. Besides the physical decimation of these historic neighbourhoods and the loss of the green areas, the noise pollution from an overhead subway, as well as construction, will be unbearable.

As I live at 226 Victor Avenue, which is two streets north of Carlaw and Gerrard, and across from the No Frills on Carlaw—where they say they're going to have an underground subway—I know that this loud subway noise would be intolerable and would also be detrimental to my emotional and physical health, as well as to many other residents in this area. The vibration would also definitely affect the structure of these old houses, such as mine, in that area at Gerrard and Carlaw.

Please note: We do not need a subway in this area. We have wonderful transportation. I moved in 25 years ago for this. From my house it is a five-minute bus ride to the east-west subway at Pape or a 15-minute walk to Pape subway or Chester. There are streetcars at Gerrard and Queen. I can be downtown by streetcar at Queen and Yonge in 15 to 20 minutes. There are buses running north and south on Pape and Carlaw and Dundas and Gerrard Street.

This is not Etobicoke, Mississauga, Finch and Yonge or King Street, with the terrible planning by developers of condos. This is historic Riverdale and Leslieville, where people walk and bike and enjoy the green areas as a respite from the growing concrete of Toronto. This is why people live in this area and buy houses here. This project destroys the essence of our neighbourhood and will devalue our

houses and neighbourhoods due to the noise and construction.

In preparing for this speech, I walked through our neighbourhoods following the route of this overhead subway, noting what would be destroyed. I had referenced the EETA map and I'd hoped to send you photos of this area, but unfortunately I was not able to transfer the photos to my computer. I have them on an iPad, which I can show you in the 20 minutes after, as I do not know if I have enough time to do that. But I will just give an overview of this—how beautiful it was. I just thought how gorgeous and well-planned these two areas are for living space.

We have my beautiful Victor Avenue and now, at Gerrard and Logan, beautiful new houses, which are in jeopardy; then the Ray McCleary seniors' home opposite where that terrible subway thing would go through; Dundas and Logan, beautiful new houses; Jimmie Simpson Park, people were sitting out there enjoying themselves, and on the other side, beautiful homes. This is really criminal to destroy this. The recreation centre for the area, the tennis courts, the Queen streetcar right there, Leslieville shopping, Bonjour Brioche: You know, it was like being in Europe. McCleary Playground opposite on McGee, and Empire, beautiful streets, beautiful, beautiful houses. There are the restaurants and Bruce Mackey Park—a little gem.

Then I walked over to Tiverton, behind the tracks, and I met somebody who has a house right by there. Her house was built in 1876. It's right by the tracks. I don't know whether she really knew that it was going to be destroyed, because she's right there, on the tracks.

I have pictures of all this; I will show them to you. This beautiful street, old houses—destroyed by this project of Metrolinx.

Then we have the Gerrard and Carlaw dog park, we have our fire station and we have these beautiful new streetcars. Why are we spending money? Why are we spending money on this when we just bought these new streetcars?

Then there's Francis Beavis on Pape Avenue—I walked over to Pape. All those lovely little houses that we, the small people, are building, so we have a life—building this area.

It is truly criminal, what is going on. I have to ask you: Who is the subway project really serving? Certainly not the residents and our neighbours of Riverdale and Leslieville. In my opinion, this bill and the Ontario Line have not been thought through properly and have put in jeopardy these historic, interesting neighbourhoods. And just hearing this woman speak about also the reign of terror—where are people going to go? Is there no consideration in this government for where people are going to go and about life?

The consequences of this subway line on our neighbourhoods, coupled with the cost of building the line, far outweigh the benefits. The money for this project is enormous, especially now in the COVID crisis, and would be better directed to finally fixing up our present subway system, finally fixing Eglinton and finishing other subway

projects, or maybe improving health care and long-term-care homes.

Most importantly, we have to have vision with the impact of the COVID pandemic and its aftermath. It is essential to preserve the green space in Toronto and all Ontario cities as more people will be working at home and not using the subways and trains as much. I do not use the subway. As there will be more people working from home, there will be a greater need in the community for green space, parks and a hospitable living environment.

Doug Ford is trying to push this Ontario Line and fast-track everything with this bill, giving us the reason that we need to relieve the main subway lines. I do not believe this. We are in the middle of a pandemic, and people's attitudes toward work, life and subway travel is changing. This is not the time to push and pass an undemocratic bill which supports a very expensive subway project which will destroy very beautiful, historic neighbourhoods. Rather, it is time to step back and really look at the development projects in Toronto and Ontario in a new and innovative way and prepare a proper plan that will have regard for the people, the community, and the environment.

I'm very passionate about this. I love this area. I moved into it 25 years ago. It's my home; it's my retirement. To see this destroyed is devastating to me. I hope that what I say can affect something and that we can stop this, because this is an issue which affects many lives and the future of Toronto.

If I have time now, I can show some pictures. How many minutes do I have?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): You have 40 seconds remaining.

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: Okay, well, I have to prepare the iPad. I could prepare it for that; I don't know. If the members want to look at some of the pictures, I can't give them now, for the 40 seconds, because I have to get into the iPad. This is the problem. But I can send this speech and also all the other things that I have gathered with this—I just have to figure out the computer; I couldn't get them to mail—if the committee would like to look at them.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Okay. We will begin our questions this morning with the government for seven minutes. Go ahead, MPP Karahalios.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Wonderful. Thank you, Madam Chair. How are the acoustics? Can you hear me okay?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Yes.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Excellent. So thank you, Ms. Bogle, for coming in—well, for Zooming in—this morning. The great thing about doing this by Zoom is the accessibility side of things for this, because we know that parking in the city of Toronto is a challenge at best. And as much as we have great transportation in the city of Toronto, it could be better.

It's interesting. There's a lot that you said today, and so I do want to give my colleagues a chance to ask some questions as well. But I just wanted to talk about one thing in particular. You spoke about how this is not something that's needed particularly for your community. And I think

that we should take a step back and realize that transportation in Toronto doesn't just serve Toronto. I live in Cambridge and I commute to Toronto when I need to go into the Legislature. My options are to drive for two hours on the 401, which is fine; I chose to live out here. I made that choice and I'm happy to get in the car and to drive. Or, two, I can take the GO train service that we have from Kitchener station, where there is no parking and where it can take me two and a half hours to get to Toronto.

So when I saw this bill and saw that we were finally going to expand the subways and our transit system in Toronto, it was great, not only as a commuter but as someone who likes to travel when I am downtown. It makes it so much easier. So it's not just about your neighbourhood; it's not just about Toronto. It's about all of us commuters who want another way to get to work, to get to the theatre, to get to whatever great things there are to offer in your city. So it really is about so much more.

1140

The other side of things is that it is going to be built on existing rail lines. We're doing a lot of consultation. There have been some online consultations and community engagements. This is a key part of the planning and design process, ensuring that local residents receive regular updates. Metrolinx is encouraging people to sign up for regular newsletter updates at www.metrolinx.com/ontarioline, and there are going to be a lot of opportunities for people to provide input because in a democracy—you said it doesn't seem democratic—people get to have their voices heard. If that was the case, we really wouldn't be doing these consultations. We really wouldn't be doing this committee hearing to hear from people like yourself, to take back your opinions and suggestions and try to implement them, if and where we can.

It's the outreach that has been conducted and that will be conducted. Public open houses, unfortunately because of COVID-19, cannot happen at this time, but these opportunities will be advertised in a variety of ways to ensure that people know how they can engage with us.

In terms of environmental and community considerations, we're going to know more as the project moves through the further design stages. It's kind of in its infancy right now, which will inform environmental studies.

Again, I appreciate you coming in today, and I appreciate the passion behind your deputation this morning. I'm just wondering—understanding that now we've had some consultations, were you aware that that was done in the past or is that new to you—just out of curiosity?

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: What do you mean by that?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: There have been consultations occurring. There's a new letter where they're communicating—

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: Yes, I had been aware of that. I just thought it was still in the stages of not being pushed through. For me, it's all of it coming as the reality that this may go through.

I want to answer this. You live in a very nice place in Cambridge—you probably have a nice place—and I know Cambridge because my sister lived there. But I don't care

what project we do; you do not destroy neighbourhoods just because you need to come into Toronto. You just should not have an idea like that—that you destroy neighbourhoods because we need more transportation. There has to be more vision about that. You do not go through with that; right? You can't do that.

I understand that people want to come into Toronto—but find a way to go around these beautiful neighbourhoods. Do you understand what I'm saying? This is a problem. People want to come in and go to the show, or, "I want to do this. I have to come into Toronto." Yes, we understand that, but there are other ways to do it rather than decimate one of the historic neighbourhoods in Toronto.

Today, we have to make green spaces for people, and what about all these people who are going to be out on the street, like from the old age homes and everything? There has to be a bigger vision than, "Oh, I just have to be able to come into Toronto."

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you. I believe MPP Babikian wants to ask a question.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you very much for your presentation. I am someone who is living in Scarborough. Today, the way Toronto is growing, in a few years' time it will be very difficult to use public transit. As it is right now, it is very difficult to use public transit to move from one place of the city to another, and the intention of this line is to help elevate and relieve the pressure on our public system and provide more public transit. By doing that, we are going to be able to eliminate driving.

For example, I tried to use public transit for a while. I had to wait for five or six different trains to get on one. That's why I had to change. I had to drive every day to Queen's Park. This line will bring relief to the entire city.

I understand the difficulties—the passion for your neighbourhood. But also consider that you will never benefit from it because, by providing a much better transit system—I love Pape Avenue. I love to take some time and go down with my friends—nice restaurants and a nice neighbourhood. It is my favourite place. But again, if I want to go to Pape Avenue, I have difficulty finding a parking space. So this line would also improve the business aspect of your neighbourhood. So that's where we're coming from.

I would appreciate if you can give me some of your thoughts about the ideas or the input I'm having on this discussion.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Unfortunately, we are out of time.

We will now proceed to seven minutes of questions by the official opposition. MPP Tabuns, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ms. Bogle, thank you for taking the time to join us this morning. I appreciate your commentary.

You started off by speaking directly about the removal of citizens' rights to object in this bill. Could you enlarge on that? Were you speaking about expropriation or were you talking about other elements as well?

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: I'm speaking about expropriation. When I read the bill, the people do not have the right, if something is injured—that we have no rights; there are no rights to something destroyed or anything. You have absolutely no rights. That's what I'm talking about. Expropriation—you have no rights if they injure your property or whatever happens to the property, and that's what I object to.

First of all, I really object to that and the fact that it's fast-tracking. In this time when human rights and everything is so in question, we see in the United States and all the things that are happening there, because people—the small people are unhappy. It's just not right that we have no rights as far as our livelihood because this transit system is going on.

There has to be more vision. There have to be ways to get around it. I personally have looked at going down to Exhibition Place and coming up through our neighbourhood. I don't agree with that. I think we are a very successful neighbourhood. Listen, they're one of the most beautiful neighbourhoods and they're one of the most interesting neighbourhoods in Toronto because they're like Europe and they're building as a foundation and balancing. We need planning committees that are going to balance and not build condos all day.

Things are changing. That's what I'm saying. Things are changing with COVID. People are changing their way of life. Let's at least save some of the neighbourhoods and green spots we have in this city. Yes, find ways to do it, but do not go into major areas, displacing people in old-age homes and destroying the whole historic nature of the city, just because we need a subway line.

I feel very strongly about that. There are other ways to do it. There have to be better ways to do it.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ms. Bogle, thank you very much. I'll turn my time over to my colleagues.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you very much, Ms. Bogle, for your presentation. I'm coming to you from Ottawa, and one of the things that struck me when you were speaking, as I've been saying at this committee, is that we've had our own experience with a massive infrastructure project, the light rail project, that has not gone well at all. One of the debates that we've had as that project has moved forward—or not worked at all, which is the current situation—is housing and accommodation, particularly for low-income people. You mentioned what kinds of things can happen, what things can transpire, for instance, with people with disabilities or low-income seniors, when thought isn't given to what happens to neighbourhoods after there are mass expropriations. I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit on that.

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: Yes, that was one of the things that really, really struck me, and also hearing the lady speak today. Many people in my neighbourhood—my Greek lady who asked me to speak—have been here 45 years. We fought against the city to get a better neighbourhood, to get out the drug landlords and everything. The

thing about this is that people have invested in this community for 45 years of life; myself, 25. So if they come in and expropriate, where are you going to go? They have no money to do it.

That poor woman in those—there are four old-age homes in this community around Pape. Is the government going to pay for these people? Are they going to put them out on the street again? This is another big issue. Are we going to put everybody out in the streets as these people—the young people have invested in these beautiful homes, and the neighbourhood becomes worse because there's more concrete, the beautiful parks are gone and you get into big downtown problems. That's what I'm concerned about as well. I'm sorry; Metrolinx has not done a good job over on Eglinton and everything. These projects are a mess.

Overhead is also the environmental issue. There is a movement, a fear, "Oh, we've got to have this; we've got to have that." People are sitting at home in pandemic and realizing that we don't have to have all that.

We have to step back and have vision and build something for cities so that when people are living at home more to work, there is an environment that we can live in. This is what I—and not displace people, get more homeless people. There's going to be a lot. The government will be responsible—they have those people—to put new homes in for them and not treat them badly. This is what I'm concerned in all of this: the lack of vision, the lack of concern for the community. It's all about concrete subways. It's not about a concern for people and the environment, and this is our future. Of course, we have to deal with that, but let's deal.

As this bill is being pushed, this worries me, because this bill is being pushed through by—and this is not correct. There must be time to really think about: Is this really the right thing? So many people are going to be displaced. So many people who have put their life savings—what are they going to do if they expropriate that house? This is not a small issue. This is a fundamental issue with this government, and with our government in general in the coming years, of how we are going to treat community and people, and not just transit. Let us think of the environment, the community, the people. That's what I think.

Mr. Joel Harden: Ms. Bogle, I would—is there a minute left, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Less than a minute.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'd just like to put the mike to my friend Jess Bell, who has a story of seniors being forcibly relocated from her riding that I think is of value in your discussion.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Go ahead, MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for raising that, MPP Harden. The concerns you have around seniors being forced to leave as a result of development is something that's happening in my riding of University–Rosedale. There is this idea that supply alone will address the

housing crisis. It won't, because there are many people who already have homes who are being evicted and moved in order to make way for more expensive supply. So it is a complicated issue. Thank you for coming today.

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We will now move on to Mr. Blais, the independent Liberal member, for six minutes.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much for your presentation this morning, Ms. Bogle. You mentioned that efforts have been made through your MPP and your city councillor and they've gone unheard by Metrolinx or whomever. I'm wondering if you can articulate, perhaps, a little bit on those.

Ms. Stephanie Bogle: Well, as a community, Councillor Paula Fletcher is always informing us of this. This is why I came too, because she has been informing us of what's happening. She asked us to take a stand. She sent us an email and said that it was very, very important that we express our opinion. Peter Tabuns had also discussed some of the things put in the email about what was happening. This really spurred me to action, because I really felt that—they have been saying this.

Then when I saw that there actually were going to be meetings here, then I said, "I have to speak." Because they have really kept us abreast and really tried to inform us, to encourage us to do that, and that's why I'm here today.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much for your passion and for your presentation. I hope you have a wonderful afternoon.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. This concludes all the presenters we have for today. As a reminder, the deadline to send in a written submission will be 6 p.m. on June 10—sorry; not for today but for this morning, I meant to say, of course. So this committee will now stand in recess until 1 p.m. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1154 to 1300.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Good afternoon. I call the social policy committee back to order. We are meeting today for public hearings on Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts.

PAPE AREA CONCERNED CITIZENS FOR TRANSIT

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): I'm pleased to welcome our first presenter for this afternoon, Mr. Richard Sigismund, who is a member of the executive committee for the Pape Area Concerned Citizens for Transit. Welcome.

You have 10 minutes for your presentation this afternoon, and you may begin by stating your name for the record.

Mr. Richard Sigismund: I'm Richard Sigismund. Thank you guys for listening to me today.

After he was elected, Doug Ford would often remind us that 2.3 million voters voted for the Conservative Party. One of the Conservative Party's mission statements is to

protect the health and the well-being of Ontario's families. Just yesterday on TV, Doug Ford said, "I am here for the little guy." The reason why I asked to speak to you today was to hold Mr. Ford and his party accountable to these promises. Ontarians are presented with a bill that is here to hurt the little guy, and instead of protecting the health and well-being of Ontario's families, it has the potential to tear families from their homes and gravely impact neighbourhoods such as the one that I live in.

I have a particular interest in this bill since I am one of the executive members of PACCT, or Pape Area Concerned Citizens for Transit, and have been a resident of the Golden Triangle area for over 18 years.

PACCT represents over 150 households in the Pape and O'Connor area. We are a grassroots, volunteer-driven, pro-transit organization that was created to communicate our Ontario Line-related concerns to the three levels of government and to Metrolinx. We are here to be a voice for the little guy.

Four months ago, we reached out to Metrolinx to start a dialogue and to ask them to begin meaningful consultation with our group. Metrolinx has been receptive to meeting with us. We have had a number of informative phone meetings, and we appreciate Metrolinx's eagerness to communicate with us. The same goes for our MP, city councillor and MPP, who have all taken the time to listen to our fears and concerns regarding the Ontario Line.

I think we all have the same goal when it comes to the Ontario Line: to leave a transit legacy that Toronto residents and the Conservative government could be proud of, and to have a smartly and carefully built line. If designed and built properly, and with the right community consultation, the Ontario Line could take cars off the road and increase the quality of life for all Ontarians, but especially those who will live near stations and will be able to utilize transit. If meaningful community consultation is not done, then the Ontario Line will be nothing more than a scar that cuts across the face of Toronto's east side.

Bill 171 sure feels like a scalpel in waiting to make the first painful, jagged incision cut. The language in this bill does nothing to protect Ontario families. I'm incredibly concerned with the lack of meetings to appeal the home expropriation issue. In our neighbourhood, we are talking about homes that are over 100 years old and in some cases have been passed down from one generation to the next. Why wouldn't we all want there to be a means in place for the little guy to challenge the expropriation of the family home?

PACCT is very concerned about what expropriation may involve and about the extent of expropriation in our neighbourhood. Metrolinx has told us that there aren't any details they can release to us yet regarding the Don Valley bridge and how big of an expropriation footprint there may be.

We've all seen the semi-abstract drawings of the Ontario Line's approximate route, and we're told that a bridge will cross over the Don Valley, with the bridge's terminus being smack dab in our quiet, homey neighbourhood on a quaint street called Minton Place. The fact is,

there aren't any community consultations regarding the location of the bridge. That on its own is an affront to our neighbourhood and is very concerning, but the lack of planning details is also adding insult to injury. Imagine owning a home and not knowing if one day there will be a knock on your door and a stranger will hand you a letter saying, "Congratulations. Your home is going to be torn down to make room for a tunnel," and there isn't a single thing you can do about this. For our close-knit neighbourhood, dozens of homes are living under this threat, with zero recourse, in accordance to what's being planned in this bill.

Taxpayers should feel that they can trust the government. Having a means to appeal, to ask for help, is something that every homeowner should have; otherwise, there will always be whispers of a spiteful or unnecessary expropriation. Bill 171 is about taking our rights away; taking away the rights from a taxpayer. So why would we not look at creating a bill that would actually look after our needs?

Although she's not here today, I would ask Ms. Mulroney to consider this. I hoped that she would have created a bill like Bill 171 that would aim to do what's best for communities; instead, it makes zero efforts to hear community concerns, but takes large, heavy-footed steps to do the opposite and eliminate the sole means for us to express our concern regarding expropriation.

Us being concerned about the bill's mechanism for expropriation is not our only issue. We hope that sanity will prevail and that someone will hear our pleas regarding the Don Valley bridge's proposed location and actually take it to heart and listen to why it's problematic for our quiet little neighbourhood. We're concerned about the massive expropriation footprint and what it will do to families that are currently living there.

We're concerned that this bill does nothing to alleviate our neighbourhood's concerns regarding the Ontario Line's construction, its operation, and the vibration that will happen from construction, as well as the noise from construction.

This isn't a bill for the people; it's a bill for the government and for contractors, and frankly, that upsets me. This concern is currently driving old neighbourhood stalwarts to pack up and move. Families that we see on the street, smile to, and wave and chat with—they're all leaving in droves. You drive down our street and you see houses, non-stop, that are for sale.

People are concerned, and they're moving. We're seeing a steady stream of people leaving who were here for decades. Families are communicating to our group, to our executive, that the lack of details regarding the line is causing anxiety, and this bill in its current form is only further causing anxiety to us. We're afraid that, with this bill, Metrolinx could do something like sever cross-streets, effectively walling off one side of our community from the other.

As I mentioned, we've had very positive conversations with Metrolinx that we greatly appreciate, but wouldn't this bill be better served to guarantee that meaningful

community consultation should be part of all significant construction projects, such as the Ontario Line? This is a bill that gives a government agency power to amputate streets from the rest of the neighbourhood, and there isn't a damned thing we could do to stop this once the plan is in motion.

Our group represents a neighbourhood where families walk down the street. We've had bike clubs use our street as part of their daily routes—a street where neighbours pop lawn chairs on their driveway and spend summer evenings chatting with each other while sharing a brown pop. We want to know why a tunnel is planned to exit in the middle of our neighbourhood, on Minton Place, a street where families gather to watch sunsets or see deer feeding in the Don Valley, and why a less negatively impactful site, such as the Millwood bridge, which is 100 metres east, wasn't selected. We think we're owed that answer.

We're looking for a bill that declares a partnership or says that the government wants to work with communities instead of a bill that threatens to rip our homes from us, whether we like it or not. I ask our Premier and Ms. Mulroney: If you were living along the Ontario Line and if you had a threat of expropriation looming over your head, wouldn't you want to be able to discuss this with a government official? Wouldn't you want to have a means of appeal if your house was chosen for expropriation? Shouldn't there be some sort of mechanism in place?

I understand that the goal of this bill is to speed up subway building. I cannot stress enough how myself and PACCT are pro-transit. We are 100% pro-transit, but my biggest concern is that the rush for the goal line will do nothing but result in broken neighbourhoods, will displace families that have been living there forever, and will create lingering resentment towards elected officials that approved these transit projects.

1310

We only get one shot to get this right, but let's not shoot ourselves in the foot trying to take this one shot.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We will begin our questions today with the official opposition for seven minutes. MPP Tabuns, you have the floor.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate that.

Mr. Sigesmund, thank you for taking the time to address this today. You put your concerns quite well.

I want to go to the question of expropriation, which came up a few times in your remarks. You note the removal of the ability to appeal the decision to expropriate. Could you expand on why the community doesn't have confidence that ministerial discretion is going to be enough to protect them?

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: Thank you, Mr. Tabuns. I guess the first thing I'll say is, the proof is in the pudding. We've had little to no conversations with Metrolinx regarding expropriation, regarding the plan; and we have not had any real information from the Ontario government regarding the route and what will be happening regarding

the tunnel that will be going in place. We have no reason to believe that there will be any positive result in potential expropriation plans.

There's nothing in the bill itself, in the language, and there's nothing in the planning of the Ontario Line that would give us or our group any indication that the government wants to look after the taxpayer and wants to be a willing partner in building this line, and to ensure that the people that are living near the line won't be kicked out of their homes. We would love to see something from the government that would give us reassurance. Frankly, the language in this bill does the complete opposite, and it scares us.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Fair enough. Thank you. That's a very thorough response.

Chair, I'll yield my spot. I think my other colleague wants to speak to this.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for coming in today and sharing your concerns. It's important to put this into context when you mention the words "pro-transit," and it's important to remember that, by and large, this community had said yes to a relief line running through their neighbourhood. A route was chosen after extensive consultation with the community. I haven't yet heard a very sound argument for why we couldn't have just built the relief line—or why we couldn't build the relief line and then just extend it into areas that certainly deserve transit.

My question to you is this: What is your vision for transit through your community? What would you like to see?

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: That's a great question. Transit for our community should be something that should be accessible for everyone. It should be meaningful transit, not just willy-nilly routes created, bridges crossing and certain routes that would have a negative impact on a neighbourhood. It would be transit that could serve the greatest number of people and transit that would not have a negative impact on our daily lives.

Transit isn't just about a bus or a train or a subway taking you from point A to point B; it's about building communities around the transit hubs, making sure that low-income families can access transit, making sure they could take cars off the road so that there is a positive environmental impact. My vision for transit is something that could hit all those check marks.

Unfortunately, in order to achieve that vision, I believe that you need to actually have active community consultation. It would be great if someone from the Conservative Party would come to our neighbourhood, do a walk-around. I invite all of you. Let's social-distance and walk through our neighbourhood. I will keep my space, I promise you. I'm a pharmacist, so I know my health-care-professional role. I would invite all of you to come to a walk-around through our neighbourhood to see what meaningful transit means to us. Frankly, it doesn't mean plopping a bridge in a neighbourhood, and people afraid of the impact of construction and the operation of a bridge.

Again, a vision for transit would be community-consultation-based transit planning. We hope that the

Conservative Party and Metrolinx would approach groups such as ours to talk to us, to hear our very valid concerns, and to see what keeps our members up at night and what they're afraid of.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. I think MPP Harden has a question as well.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Go ahead, MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you for the presentation.

I'm going to flip the question MPP Bell asked you in a different direction. Why do you think this bill has expropriation powers in it? Why do you think the government believes it's necessary? Now, I know my friends in government will say: to build transit faster. But what's your answer to that question, sir, about why the need for expropriation in the terms of this bill—why is it in here, do you think?

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: Perception is everything. Optics are everything. When you see those words about expropriation, to me, I just think of a rhinoceros charging through a crowd of 1,000 people with its head down, its horn poked out and thrashing to and fro just to get from point A to point B. That's what it feels to me. It feels like expropriation is a threat, to say that, "Guys, either you're with us or against us. If you're against us, we could potentially yank homes out, willy-nilly." It's just to get to a goal line without actually resulting in positive outcomes for communities. That's what I think it is there for.

Mr. Joel Harden: Well, I want to thank you for your presentation. As someone from a community up here in Ottawa that has gone through its own major transit infrastructure debate, I encourage you to continue speaking up, sir, and raising the questions you are raising on behalf of your family and on behalf of the community. Well done.

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you. We will now be moving on to six minutes of questions by Mr. Blais, the independent Liberal member.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thanks very much, Mr. Sigesmund, for speaking with us this afternoon, and thank you for the invitation to come on a walkabout in your community. I think that might be very helpful to do at some point.

I'm wondering about the extent to which you have been able to communicate with Metrolinx. Some presenters have said that it's spotty; some have thought that it was okay. I'm just trying to get a sense of your own personal relationship or how effective your communications with Metrolinx have been, over however long it's been.

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: That's a great question. We had to approach Metrolinx to ask if we could open up lines of communication. I understand why that was the reason. We're a grassroots organization who are relatively new. Metrolinx was quite receptive to having a call with us, and we've already had two conference calls with them and exchanged numerous emails.

That said, in addition to the open houses that they had, they really have not done much to show our group that Metrolinx is interested in hearing about our concerns. In

our last conversation that we had with Metrolinx, at the end, I frankly laid it on the table for them and told them that there's a lack of trust from our group's members regarding Metrolinx's plans and intentions, that we're very concerned about their lack of wanting to have meaningful consultation with us, and our thoughts on their lack of caring of the impact the line's design will have on neighbourhoods such as ours and such as, for example, the Gerrard east area.

Metrolinx has been good on the surface. They've been quite polite in talking to us and, again, we greatly appreciate the time that Metrolinx has afforded to us and at our upcoming conference calls that we'll have with them.

Mr. Stephen Blais: If I could jump in very quickly, just to get to the heart of something you just said: In your conversations with Metrolinx, were they subject matter experts, or were they more communications officials?

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: The first one was with subject matter experts, and then the one that we had last week was with communications officials.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that there's a lack of trust, or that trust has been broken somehow. What are, say, two or three concrete measures Metrolinx can take to get your trust back?

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: One measure would be having a town hall where they could put in not low-level people but the people who are actually influential in planning to sit down with our group and to hear our concerns. That's number one. Number two is even an email survey or anything to reach out to our community to ask us how we're feeling regarding their potential plans. Number three is that Metrolinx needs to be transparent about the planned routes that they have. So far, it's not that they haven't been transparent, but they have told us that they cannot share information with us because there isn't enough information to share; for example, the footprints of expropriation that would involve the Minton Place tunnel terminus. So we would like to hear a little bit more and to get more information so we could actually understand the route and it's not thrown on us last minute.

1320

Mr. Stephen Blais: I think that's perfectly fair. Thanks very much for your presentation today.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. Now I will pass it on to the government for seven minutes. I believe MPP Sabawy had some questions.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): MPP Sabawy appears to be frozen. Are there other members of the government that would like to start? Go ahead, MPP Martin.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you very much for your presentation. I believe we heard from another member of your organization yesterday, Mr. Yapp. He had some other comments as well.

I can assure you that we are committed to consulting with neighbours as we move these projects forward, and that's what Metrolinx is supposed to do. We certainly want them to do a better job than we've heard in the past that

they have done. I live in the Eglinton–Lawrence riding, and we have the Eglinton LRT that’s been going on for some time. So this really is an opportunity to make sure that we hold them accountable and that they do responsible work in the community to consult with people.

You mentioned the concern about expropriation. I just wanted to point out that in all major infrastructure projects, government has a power of expropriation for these things. Government has always had an expropriation power because it’s necessary. However, our approach to all of this is certainly a collaboration-first approach, and so we want to work with people to get the best results.

Really, the legislation is about streamlining processes and not changing outcomes at the end of the day. We’re just trying to get to a better place and use common-sense business solutions to coordinate utility relocations and permitting and things like that so the project doesn’t take as long and, therefore, does not disrupt the community as long as my community has been disrupted.

Can you agree that making the project streamlined in that way is useful? Do you agree with that, Mr. Sigesmund?

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: Very good job saying my name, thank you.

First of all, I just want to say I can totally appreciate what’s going on in your neighbourhood with construction. No one wants to live in an open construction pit such as the people on Eglinton have. It must be quite frustrating for you to hear the sound of construction, see those cranes, deal with the noise and the traffic.

That being said, you can clearly understand the trepidation that our group has if they’re going to be building a bridge smack dab in the middle of a tiny residential area. I appreciate you understanding our fears regarding that and the location of the Don Valley bridge.

My problem is that the language in the bill doesn’t allow us to have our fears alleviated. It presents what I consider to be the worst-case scenario. I understand there’s a rush to build transit, I fully agree that transit does need to be implemented, but transit is like baking a cake: If you rush to bake a cake, that thing is going to fall flat in the oven and you’re going to be left with one heck of a messy dessert. Everyone wants this delicious, beautiful cake that they can all cut and eat and enjoy, and unfortunately, the language in this bill, in my opinion, will result in this flat, messy cake instead of having a beautiful transit line.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): MPP Sabawy, do you have questions? Go ahead.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Richard. That you took the time to prepare and to come to present to us—that’s a very important part of the process for us to understand what are the concerns of the people. I’m glad that I hear that you are pro-transit. That’s a very big plus in our discussion—and we have the same goal here: We are trying to benefit the people. You agree with me that for many, many years, we saw nothing really tangible was done on this file to make life much easier for the vast number of people who live in Toronto, as well as the huge number of people who come to Toronto every day. That

will be a huge relief and help us to get lots of cars off the road, and that will help us in the environmental and in costs and parking and the load on the roads inside Toronto, which is already crowded—we know how crowded it is during rush hour. That’s going to help us to move people very fast and efficient, and many, many—

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Unfortunately, it looks like we are frozen once again.

Is there anyone else from the government that would like to ask a question? Go ahead, MPP Martin.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Maybe, Mr. Sigesmund—is that an Icelandic name or Danish? It’s Scandinavian of some kind, isn’t it? No? Okay, never mind.

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: No, no, it’s okay. It’s a complicated name—

Mrs. Robin Martin: It is. It’s very interesting.

I was going to ask you if you had any other suggestions for how we can work better together. I think that’s where Mr. Sabawy was going. Sorry about that.

Mr. Richard Sigesmund: So suggestions on how we work together—and, Mr. Sabawy, if that wasn’t your question, please, I welcome hearing you again, because you raised some excellent points.

Mr. Sabawy made a very important comment. He said that nothing has been done transit-wise to make life easier for Torontonians and for people in the suburbs, and I agree. We’ve had decades of stumbling and bumbling in transit, through the Liberal government, through the Conservative government before that. I’m well aware of the history.

My biggest concern is that when we’re eliminating the one recourse for a homeowner, for a taxpayer to question why their home was chosen for expropriation, that’s not doing anything to make life easier for anybody. In fact, that’s just creating an atmosphere of distrust and fear. Every government official could agree that that’s not what we want.

What we do want is meaningful community consultation. What we do want is an explanation as to why a bridge has been chosen to cross into our tiny, little neighbourhood, terminating in Minton Place. We do want to be able to not have this fear, this cloud hanging over us every single day, to know—is there going to be a knock on my door? Is the government going to come and expropriate my house? And if they do, and I don’t understand why they’re doing it, then why can’t I address this with someone? That would be my goal—for being able to have meaningful consultation with the government.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): I’m afraid that’s all the time we have for today. Thank you so much for joining us today.

MR. HAIXIANG CHU

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We do have our next presenter on the line, Haixiang Chu. My total apologies for the mispronunciation.

Mr. Haixiang Chu: Oh, that’s okay. I will just go by “Richard” so it’s easier.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Richard—wonderful. Thank you so much, Richard.

Mr. Haixiang Chu: I'm Chinese, so it's hard to pronounce the letters.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you. I really appreciate that.

We have Richard with us on the line. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, and you may begin by stating your legal name for the record.

Mr. Haixiang Chu: My legal name is Haixiang. It's spelled H-A-I-X-I-A-N-G. Last name, Chu.

I live near Eglinton Town Centre. I'm definitely for this bill, because currently under construction with Eglinton West—it's already going to help me a lot transit-wise in the future.

For the provision of this bill, the expedition of moving the utility lines out of the way and for the minister to have final say if they don't reach a deal and they can make a deal for everyone to accept—it makes sense. I'm actually surprised we didn't have this provision before.

For the land, I heard the last gentleman concerning real estate, personal private property. Is that part a concern? I think in the bill, actually, there is a provision that the real estate owner can still apply to the local planning tribunal, so I think that already clears the concern. Nobody is going to take your home overnight or anything. I think there's already a provision protecting homeowners—so that's kind of actually tied up in that tribunal for years and years before. So I don't know if that's going to change anything, really.

1330

Regarding utilities and city services, I think I'm definitely for that provision. But my concern with that is, one, even if you guys process it through the provincial Legislature, the city of Toronto is definitely going to fight you guys on every change to city services because—first, it's the cost. It costs both parties to change plans—for the city to change its planning and for Metrolinx to accommodate it. For each to come to a mutual agreement is going to take a long time. I don't know if there are any provisions for the Minister of Transportation to step in if there's a dispute between the city and the provincial government.

Also, it's quite a sweeping power that this bill has handed to Metrolinx. I noticed in the administration section that basically the minister can delegate the power that is in this bill to Metrolinx and to any entity that engages with Metrolinx. I understand that that's going to be subcontractors, subsidiaries and all that. It's quite a sweeping power handed to a private company, to one company. Even though there are a lot of appeal processes, the negotiation process, protecting the other parties in this bill, I feel that there should be more oversight on the review process before Metrolinx decides to move certain utility lines out of the way or tries to appropriate other private properties. I'm not sure if they already do it or if there's another bill. They should have a report of a cost-benefit analysis. If they don't have any reason or any auditory oversight—a timeline reduction or any other rationale to do it—they shouldn't be allowed to do it.

Don't start this process in the first place, rather than tie it down in the tribunal, because you don't do it when there are unreasonable costs, when the homeowner or the utility company can just fight it for years. In that case, you may as well just not start that process at all and just try to change the planning in the beginning. Those are my thoughts on that.

I think I have some time left, so I want to say something about the Scarborough line. Right now, based on my reading, it's still a one-stop replacement. So basically from Kennedy to Scarborough Town Centre, it's just one stop. Because I live on Eglinton, I use different stops like on Ellesmere, Midland and Lawrence quite a lot, so it reduces my travel time. If they eliminate those stops, it's going to add one or two additional transfers for my travel. They already have the stations there, so this bill doesn't really affect that. They have the space, so why do they—the only reason for the elimination is the cost, and also they want to reduce congestion. But there are other ways to reduce congestion on local roads. They're all transforming Sheppard or Eglinton into Highway 7, into kind of a speedway situation. So it just doesn't make sense for me to eliminate those stops.

Regarding the Ontario Line, I understand it's still in the planning phase. So my opinion on that is: Why doesn't it go to Exhibition Place? Because right now, if you want to go from Union to Exhibition Place in a really fast time, you can already take the GO train. If you guys didn't eliminate the discount between the GO train and the TTC, it would already be a cost-effective way of doing that. I still feel like the west end of the Ontario Line should connect up to the green line, the Bloor line, to be more effective. You still have all the stops on Queen Street, and it's more congestion reduction on the Bloor and Yonge-University lines in that way, I feel, because not a lot of people are going to Exhibition Place unless it's the CNE or some special event, right? That's my thoughts on the two lines.

I know this bill doesn't concern directly the planning of those two lines; it's just that this is the expedition of acquiring land and rights-of-way to do those, but those are just my first thoughts on the planning, because I don't know when I would get a chance to speak on that. Last time, for the Ontario Line, you guys had the same two slides from last year, and that was February, so I don't think anything changed for four months. I just want to say something to that too.

I think I'm done with my presentation. Thanks.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We will begin our questions with Mr. Blais, independent Liberal member: six minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you, Richard, for coming to speak with us this afternoon, or Zooming in. At the beginning of your presentation you mentioned that you yourself would benefit greatly from some of these projects. I think you mentioned one in particular. I'm wondering if you could elaborate on how that will improve your commute or your quality of life.

Mr. Haixiang Chu: Especially with the Eglinton light rail, the LRT—before, if I wanted to go to the west part of

town, I'd have to go down to the Bloor line, to the subway and go west. If I want to go to Bathurst or further west, or even to the airport, I have to go down and then go up. With the Eglinton line, after the whole thing is completed, after the west portion of the thing is completed, it's going to really reduce my travel time going to the west part of the city. I think this is true for the people who live in the west part of the city going to the east part. It really just connects both sides with light rail, because before the only artery for west and east for public transit was Bloor. That's it. Further north it's like this schizophrenic separate section of the city, where you have to take two hours of TTC buses to go from west to east or vice versa, so that really helps a lot.

The extension of the Yonge subway line is going to help me when I go to Richmond Hill and Markham—no, not Markham; just Richmond Hill and Thornhill, because it's only going north. It will speed it up that way, because I don't have to transfer to York Region Transit. It will speed it up, because the buses are always the slowest. You have to wait 20 minutes or 10 minutes for the bus, but a subway or an LRT is at regular intervals and the traffic doesn't affect it much.

Mr. Stephen Blais: That's wonderful. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We'll continue with seven minutes for the government. Go ahead, Mr. Babikian.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you, Mr. Chu, for your presentation and for coming to express your opinions and give us your input.

Certain things that people, some of the presenters, overlooked—some people are looking at the Ontario Line on its own, without looking at the bigger picture of the entire transit plan that the government brought: the Richmond Hill line and the other line. The issue is that we have to look at the overall picture of the future transit plans, and the Ontario Line fits in that plan.

1340

It's not that we are intentionally trying to discomfit the people where certain parts of the Ontario Line will be built. But this is the only way to do it so that we can have a future plan where it is more in line with the demand of the future in our city, transit-wise. For example, there will be 13% less crowding in Union Station. And also, when we look at the Bloor-Yonge line, it will have 17% less crowding from what it is right now.

It is awful now what transit riders are facing on the Yonge line. Many of my friends use public transit, and they always complain about the jam, the traffic, that they have to waste so much time riding on one of the lines or the trains, and this is against productivity. People, when they start their morning, they are already reaching out to their businesses frustrated and angry because they are going through these difficulties.

So that's the intention of this whole project—to ease the traffic problem in Toronto, because otherwise our city cannot handle the increase that we're going to face if we stay on the same plan. We have seen in the past where certain plans have been put through, through various

means. They've gone through so much back-and-forth that in the end it took years and years and not even a project was built. We are famous for not building transit lines in Toronto and Ontario.

The other issue that I wanted to raise with you, and I wanted to have your input—you expressed some of it earlier. The expropriation of land is being seen as an attack on the property-owning rights of the citizens. It is presented as a doom-and-gloom scenario where this project, this proposal—of course, it still needs lots of consultation, and input from the residents. It is showing that the government is going to come and take their homes without any fair market value compensation to them. This is the other thing where I'm interested to get your point of view on this issue again.

Mr. Haixiang Chu: For the first question: If you look at the David Miller government, they did a study for the downtown relief line. That line connected back up to the Bloor green line. You can already see that they gave a greater reduction for Union Station and for—was it Queen station? It was definitely greater than 13%.

I understand your point. We've already had three different plans from three different governments, and each government scrapped the plan of the last government. You guys scrapped—not you guys, but the city—Rob Ford scrapped the Transit City plan, which already made sense for me, at least.

What I'm feeling here is that it seems the Ontario Line is still in the planning phase, so nothing is concrete. So why not just take out the old plan? Those are my thoughts. I don't know about the current planning phase and how deep it is already and how much we're going to lose in opportunity cost if they scrap this plan and reintroduce the plan that goes back to the Bloor line. I don't know. That's just my opinion.

To the second one, for the property, yes—my thoughts on that are that there already are safeguards on a different level of government. In this bill, there's protection of the homeowners. Also, there are laws at the municipal level, at the province level and at the federal level that protect private property. It's the highest law of the land. You can't take other people's houses for no reason. It's a long process.

This is not going to eliminate anything. It's going to protect homeowners' rights, if anything, because this gives them a proper channel to voice their dissent to building transit near their houses because they can appeal to the local planning tribunal. So I don't think there should be any concern other than how you guys are marketing this bill. Tell people, educate people, and let them know their houses are safe. If they have any concerns, they should use the bill and just use any other means to voice their concerns.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. That's all the time we have. We will now move on to seven minutes of questions by the official opposition, beginning with MPP Tabuns. Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Chu, thank you for coming here today. I appreciate your commentary. I think my colleagues in the other parties have asked the questions that I

was going to ask, and I don't believe my other two colleagues have questions either.

Thank you so much for being part of this process.

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

Do we have the next presenter with us?

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Just as a reminder, the deadline to send in a written submission is 6 p.m. on June 10. I also wanted to let the committee know that our 3 p.m. presenter has cancelled, and because we were unable to move the last presenter to 3 p.m., we will simply take a recess at 3 o'clock.

Because we do not have the next presenter with us at the moment, we will recess until 2 p.m. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1347 to 1400.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Welcome back to our public hearings on Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts.

MR. JIMMY GRAY

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We have our next presenter, Jimmy Gray, on the line with us. Good afternoon. You may begin your presentation. You have 10 minutes. Please begin by stating your name for the record.

Mr. Jimmy Gray: Hello. My name is Jimmy Gray. I just wanted to say thank you so much for having me here today. I'm just a resident in the area where the Ontario Line will be going across.

Bill 171 would cover it in terms of—so there are three points: They'll be changing the frequency of trains; there's an elevated portion that would be in my backyard; and then it seems as though the cost for it, \$8.5 billion estimated, would be high. I just wanted to ask three questions regarding those points and then hopefully hear what the government's plan is going forward.

The \$8.5-billion price tag for this project, with large portions of it being elevated—I was wondering, if we're going to be spending such a huge sum, why not put the subway underground so that we can utilize the ground above it, as there are lots of parks allocated beside the rails and there would be way less noise pollution.

The second point about that is there are relatively few stops. If we're going to have, compared to the Eglinton Crosstown, those few stops, then you will not have to buy as much real estate to develop them and, again, you can use the land that's above it to turn into those stops.

And then the \$8.5-billion price tag, which you're looking to get 40% from, I believe, the federal government: If it's a long-term project that you're seeking in a recession, it's more likely that the project will be extended, especially because of these circumstances, so the initial price tag of \$8.5 billion doesn't seem appropriate. If we're going to increase the cost, then why not aim for the best possible solution of an underground subway in that area?

Those are my points. Go ahead.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Just for your information, you have 10 minutes to make an initial statement to the committee, and then the committee will be asking you questions. If want to add anything else, you still have quite a bit of time.

Mr. Jimmy Gray: I understand. It was short but sweet. I did not need the whole 10 minutes. Thanks.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Wonderful. So we will begin by the government asking questions for seven minutes.

Mr. Jimmy Gray: Okay.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Do I have any members of the government? MPP Sabawy, go ahead.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Jimmy. I really appreciate that you took the effort and joined us today to present. I can see you are a young man. That's very great to see our second generation is getting involved and having some say on how we can shape Ontario and how we can shape Toronto for the future for you guys. That's what we are doing. This is a long-term project. It takes many years to get in place. Usually, we don't—maybe not—see the whole [*inaudible*] version of it. You are the guys who are going to see it, and I'm very glad that you are joining us today to give us your ideas about that.

[*Inaudible*] I have my civil engineering background comes in play. I understand the benefits and the advantages of—

Failure of sound system.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Unfortunately, we are having some technical difficulties. Are there other members of government who would like to step in? Okay. We'll start with MPP Babikian, followed by MPP Thanigasalam. Go ahead.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you very much for your presentation, Jimmy.

Of course, this whole project is a multi-year project, and the title tells the story: that we want to move quickly and fast without the previous history of transportation in Ontario and the delays that happened. Even for certain projects when they were voted upon, they were not implemented. So we're hoping—that's the intention of this bill—to speed up the process and do it on time.

Of course, there will be issues or concerns, and that is natural. Also, that's the intention of these hearings—to get some feedback from the residents, stakeholders who will be affected with this project.

As a young man, your generation—you will appreciate that these kinds of projects will help make your life easier, because we are providing faster, better transportation for you, especially for the people who are living in downtown and midtown. It will be much easier for them to move around—not only that, but also for the people from the suburbs, from the GTHA and surrounding.

What are your thoughts about the end game of this plan, where we are providing much better service to our residents? Considering that we're growing very fast—over 100,000 people settle in Ontario every year, from newcomers, and it will affect our infrastructure. We need to move on quickly. I know not everyone will be happy

with it, but in the end, it is for the future. It is for your generation.

I would appreciate your thoughts about the future and how this can help you and your generation.

Mr. Jimmy Gray: I absolutely agree that it will help in the future.

The question I was posing is, since it's such a huge sum that we're allocating to this project—that we put it below the ground instead of above the ground. Then as you were saying, it's hopefully going to relieve the Yonge-Bloor midtown stop by having it go up to Pape. If you're allocating these resources to build this line, I believe that the frequency of stops—there's relatively few, so the buses will have to bring them to those locations.

Again, it seems like quite a huge sum of money is being allocated for a relatively—well, it's a long distance, but relatively few stops. I guess the crux of what I was trying to emphasize is, why not do a big dig? Because the benefits outweigh the costs there. Especially if it's for the future, then you will be able to build or use the land on top of the subway tracks for parks and other things that are already there in place. If you follow the way the line currently is going, you will see that most areas along it are parkettes. It would be fantastic to have a running trail or something like that on top.

1410

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Mr. Sabawy, did you want to finish your thoughts? Okay. Unfortunately, we are out of time; sorry.

We will now move on to questions by the official opposition.

MPP Tabuns, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Gray, thanks very much for taking the time to prepare and present before us today. It makes a difference in terms of this process.

I have a few questions about the bill and this project. I know that your focus has been on the project itself, but I want to talk a bit about the context. I don't know if you know this, but the work can start—construction can get under way—before an environmental assessment has actually been completed on the whole project. Were you aware of that, and if you weren't previously, does it concern you that the project could start without full assessment of its environmental impact?

Mr. Jimmy Gray: Mr. Tabuns, you've done a fantastic job in our area representing environmental concerns, especially in an area such as the Don Valley trail. Thanks so much for that.

The environmental assessment I'm not as concerned about because—I think I've emphasized this before—if we go below ground then it would be less damaging. Also, I'm sure that the groundwater in other areas, because it's so close to the lake, should be assessed, but regardless of the assessment it seems like they will move forward with enhancing the transportation in this area. The railroad line is already there, so in the area that's closest to me, it will just mean higher frequency of trains, regardless of the growth of the current environmental footprint. I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, it does.

The other thing—I don't know if you are aware of this—this bill removes the protection for citizens to appeal an expropriation of their home. Currently in law people can, when they're given an expropriation notice, appeal and put forward an argument that the expropriation was problematic and wrongful. That disappears with this act, but interestingly, not for the rest of Ontario; only for the houses along the Ontario Line and the three other transit lines proposed by this government. Does it concern you that people who are affected by this bill will have rights taken away from them that no one else in Ontario will have taken away from them?

Mr. Jimmy Gray: I have no comment on that, unfortunately.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Fair enough.

You talked about the scale of the expenditure that we're looking at. It's quite large. Have you ever been told by anyone the difference in cost between putting the line above ground or putting it underground?

Mr. Jimmy Gray: Absolutely, it would be considerably more expensive to put it underground, but if you look at the financial markets currently you can see that we're expending quite a bit of money to repair from this current recession and the economic despair that's currently plaguing our economy. So I believe absolutely that the cost, especially with inflation, would be a small sum to pay for the future.

If you look at the Gardiner—although it's fantastic for industry in the area, doing the repairs on it now we can see that it's far more expensive. I think common opinion about the Gardiner, another above ground project, is that if it was below, then we would have a much better waterfront. As an environmentalist like yourself, I believe that the water is one of the most important resources in our area, so as long as that's protected, it would be beneficial for everyone.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks very much. I really appreciate your answers, and I appreciate, again, the time you took to join us today.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now move on to Mr. Blais, the independent Liberal member, for six minutes of questions.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Just to follow up on a question that MPP Tabuns asked, I appreciate that you said that you know that burying the line will cost more, but has anyone ever articulated to you the difference in cost?

Mr. Jimmy Gray: So you're looking for the exact estimate of burying the lines, the two portions?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm wondering if you've ever been able to get that information.

Mr. Jimmy Gray: Unfortunately, I don't believe so, but when I was doing my due diligence for this meeting—we can compare it to constructions such as Athens, where they had archaeological digs and other barriers that they had to deal with when they were developing their subway. They did it far below the cost in 1992. Toronto being a relatively new city compared to that, I don't believe the costs should be as high as they are.

The only limitation would be that with such a big project, you are probably looking at less competitive bids, and so I would hope that the government would use the resources they have to potentially open it up to smaller players, so that it's more of a collaborative effort, to reduce the cost.

That being said, I understand the market that we're in and there are relatively few developers that would be able to take this project as it is now.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much for speaking with us this afternoon. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. Do we have our next presenter on the line?

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Our next presenter is just being admitted, so we will wait a moment or so.

Just as a reminder, the deadline to send in written submissions will be 6 p.m. on June 10.

MS. JOYCE HALL

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Good afternoon, Joyce Hall. Welcome. Thank you for joining us. You have 10 minutes for your presentation today, and you may begin by stating your name for the record.

Ms. Joyce Hall: Okay, so we're starting before 2:30, are we?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): If that's okay with you.

Ms. Joyce Hall: That's fine. I just have to get a computer in place where I have my presentation. I'll just be one moment. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Not a problem.

Ms. Joyce Hall: Hello. Yes, I am ready to appear.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Wonderful. So you may begin by stating your name for the record, and we will begin your 10-minute countdown then. Thank you.

Ms. Joyce Hall: Thank you. My name is Joyce Hall. I am speaking to you today from Grey county. Good afternoon, Ms. Kusendova and members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on Bill 171. My contribution to the discussion will consist of some points raised by the Canadian Environmental Law Association in their submission to Ms. Kusendova on March 19 and points raised by elected members during the second reading of the bill on February 24 and in subsequent telephone conversations. Finally, I will raise concerns about the process used to draft the bill.

1420

First of all, CELA expressed concerns about changes to the Expropriations Act; specifically, the exclusion of hearings of necessity to adjudicate expropriations and the replacement of those hearings by ministerial discretion. In addition, Bill 171 specifically excludes the Statutory Powers Procedure Act from applying to the new ministerial process.

The legal provisions for hearings of necessity exist because of the historical experience of governments that have gone before this one. There are checks and balances to reassure citizens who might otherwise fear arbitrary and unfair actions taken against them by large government entities. This concern was also raised during second reading by the representative of the voters and citizens of University–Rosedale, Jessica Bell.

In addition to removing hearings of necessity, the bill also bars lawsuits by individuals aggrieved by Bill 171. This constitutes another unfortunate removal that we would not have expected to see in a free society which respects individual rights, and it concerns me greatly.

Another matter raised during second reading was unforeseeable and possibly never-to-be-calculated costs associated with lack of coordination between utilities and prioritized transit projects. This measure, meant to speed construction, could too easily turn out to do the opposite and incur huge costs. As far as I know, this issue has not been resolved.

I am also concerned about the intention to shortcut the environmental assessment process. Under Bill 171, early works on the Ontario Line can be designed and built, including station construction, prior to the release of a draft environmental impact assessment report and long before the overall transit planning process has been completed. This one for me had red flags. CELA calls this “piecemealing”—inconsistent with good environmental planning. That has been discouraged under other environmental assessment legislation for decades.

I come now to my main point: a call for co-operative, evidence-based decision-making in planning to improve the lives of Ontarians. You are engaged here in an awesome task, and I do not envy you your responsibility. What do your constituents want from you as their representatives during this important planning process?

I set about to learn more about the process behind the creation of Bill 171. Over the past few days, I've spoken to members of Ontario's opposition parties who have informed me that they were not consulted during the drafting of Bill 171.

As an individual who believes in real democracy, I am concerned. I'm not alone. After a federal government survey in 2017, 70% of Canadians want a government where several parties agree before a decision is made. I cannot help but feel that Bill 171 would look very different if it had been arrived at with all representatives of all parties sitting around the table collaborating in a way that would put citizens' minds at ease that the best possible result had been arrived at.

Ernest Naville wrote in 1865, “In a democratic government, the right of decision belongs to the majority, but the right of representation belongs to all.”

During the February second reading of Bill 171, an MPP said the following: “In June 2018, the people of Ontario voted overwhelmingly for a government committed to getting the province moving.” Well, what about first past the post? I have to point out that in Canada, parties

receive a majority of seats based on anywhere from 37% to 40% of the vote.

This government, in fact, won the 2018 election based on 40.5%, which is not overwhelming. And I need to point out the naked truth that 59.5% of the voters voted for other parties. Given this defect of our electoral system, there is a moral imperative that the party who wins under the current system consult in earnest with other parties to ensure that legislation will reflect the will of the majority, or more, of the voters.

Fair Vote Canada calls for collaboration when any party wins an election with 37% to 40% of the vote—which is all the time—until such time as collaboration is necessitated by a proportional system. As long as winning governments take advantage of their low-threshold majority wins under first past the post to make radical changes without consulting elected representatives from any other parties, our province will be a lurching, rudderless boat. This government will make changes to certain acts, and in three years another government may well come along and reinstate what has been removed. It's quite possible, for example, that Bill 171's removal of due process during expropriations will cause outrage or that late-arriving environmental assessments will cause expensive delays or even necessitate demolitions. One of these could become a hot election issue in 2022. Then, when the government changes, laws are reversed. And no one ever counts the cost, because it is unfathomable. Yes, often laws need to be changed, but the right of citizens to due process during expropriation or the logic of doing an environmental assessment before first steps are taken in a construction project are not among those things that need to be changed.

There is a new and burgeoning awareness among citizens in the era of COVID-19 of ourselves as interconnected and interdependent, called upon in our everyday behaviour to protect not just our immediate group, but others—strangers. We are particularly dependant on workers we've taken for granted to perform their duties made now more dangerous and onerous. Ordinary people are being called to high levels of ethics and responsibility. So if every citizen is important in a time of crisis, should not each one have their representative at the table as social planning and policy take place?

I finish by calling for the highest degree of respect for the input of all MPPs and interested stakeholders in reviewing Bill 171 and in the formulation of all legislation. Give Canadians what they so long to see in the government to which they have no choice but to give their trust and their tax dollars: collaborative, inclusive, evidence-based democratic decision-making. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you so much, Ms. Hall. We will begin our rounds of questions this afternoon with the official opposition for seven minutes. Go ahead, MPP Tabuns.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ms. Hall, thank you very much for taking the time to present to us today. You offered a number of interesting avenues for questions. I will just explore one and my colleagues will explore the others.

You talk about the way the bill is structured or the way power is structured by the bill with regard to utility relocations and said the potential existed for that to create problems and in fact lead to cost overruns. Could you expand on that, please, for the committee?

Ms. Joyce Hall: Well, I realized in the reading that I did that they just hadn't been built in, that the interaction between these prioritized projects and utility projects hadn't been very carefully planned and figured into the planning process. So it seems obvious that if it's not planned then unplanned things are going to happen, and they are going to be expensive. It's just very wasteful. Poor planning causes waste.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes. I agree with you entirely. That's a good answer.

Chair, I'm happy to turn the microphone over to my colleagues.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now turn it over to MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Ms. Hall, for your presentation. I'm coming to you from Ottawa. I very much appreciate—as much as I love my GTA friends who are on this call, it's nice to hear voices weighing in from across the province on issues like this.

It's interesting; you mention the issue of how governments who win majorities by virtue of the curious nature—that Canadians exercising their franchise in electing people. Even a majority government, you mentioned, has the responsibility to consult widely. As you mentioned, the current government won with 40% votes cast, so a majority of Ontarians actually voted for a different thing. So that's an interesting point of departure to look at this particular bill, which isn't just moving with some speed; it's moving with breakneck speed.

Here in Ottawa—you may not know—we have our own experience with light rail transit. It was procured by a was public-private partnership consortium. It was late, it massively over budget, and it isn't working right now. It is completely non-functional. What we're learning currently is that many of the Alstom trains weren't even designed to handle the Canadian winter, if you can imagine, in a climate like ours.

1430

So all that leads me to think about, as an Ottawa politician working within an Ontario framework with neighbours like you, is—and as much as we want things to happen quickly because we do have congestion issues that my friends on this committee have raised—it more important to make sure that, as you pointed out, we consult widely and we make the right decisions? If we make the wrong decisions, it may end up costing us a lot later. I'm wondering if you can elaborate on this train of thought I detected in your deputation.

Ms. Joyce Hall: Yes. I like the train of thought. I did note in CELA's letter that they didn't see any reason at all for any of the measures regarding speed. According to CELA, they were not supported by evidence. So that will depend on CELA's guidance there.

The other thing is in terms of consultation. As I said to Mr. Tabuns, you're going to get a better result if you have evidence-based policy when you're spending millions and billions of taxpayers' money. So I'm very sorry to hear about the cost overruns and the fact that the citizens of Ottawa are not getting what they paid for and that it is held up.

I believe it definitely, especially in first past the post, where we have majorities won with low thresholds—I really love that quote by Ernest Naville: “The right of decision belongs to the majority, but the right of representation belongs to all.”

You just don't exclude people—and 40.5% is not even a majority. Their obligation is at least to assemble enough members around them to be able to say, “Okay, we represent a majority of the citizens here.” I don't think they should even stop there. I think that the more inclusive that you can be, the better. As a representative democracy, the citizens are tied. We have to pay our taxes. And if our representatives aren't sitting at the policy table, we feel pretty helpless.

So thank you for your question.

Mr. Joel Harden: You're welcome, and I would remind you and everyone on this call that Ottawa's LRT fiasco isn't just an Ottawa problem; it's the country's problem. We've had multiple levels of government—the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government.

It's funny; you mentioned a quotation earlier. I'm thinking of a different inspirational leader for me as a politician. You may have heard of him; his name is Nelson Mandela. One of the things Mandela implored us to remember is to let your decisions be guided by your hopes and not your fears.

As I am listening to people depute to this committee, Ms. Hall, I am reminded of the constant fear that is being brought forward here about congestion and transit and gridlock. There is a palpable fear. I know that when I'm in Toronto for work, I see it. I see the people waiting for trains that are full and go by, and buses and streetcars, so I take the point.

However, I am shocked, I have to tell you, that I have yet to hear in this committee any of my Conservative or Liberal friends mention the massive cost overruns that have happened with public-private partnerships—particularly my friends of the Conservative Party, who are always ones to announce themselves as being guardians of the public purse. The Eglinton Crosstown: There was \$237 million apparently injected into that; reportage might be as much as \$330 million. Here in Ottawa, we have a \$2-billion expenditure that is, at the moment, non-functional.

Could you help me understand from your perspective why friends of mine in politics who are normally sharp and razor-minded about cost overruns seem to give a pass on public-private partnerships?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Unfortunately, we are out of time; so sorry about that.

We will now move on to six minutes of questions by Mr. Blais, the independent Liberal member. Go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much for your presentation to us this afternoon.

I do think it is important to correct the record: There haven't been any cost overruns in the Ottawa LRT project. The city hasn't spent any more money than it has budgeted for, and to say otherwise is just not factually accurate.

In terms of your concerns vis-à-vis the process that is surrounding this particular piece of legislation, the concerns on the environmental assessments are interesting and very valid. You only touched on it for about two minutes or so as part of your presentation. I'm wondering if you have any additional thoughts about the implications of the changes that were made as part of the regulations there and the outcome that it could lead to as part of the project.

Ms. Joyce Hall: Okay. May I ask for clarification on the regulations that you're talking about there?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, the environment assessment changes were done through regulation.

Ms. Joyce Hall: Right.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Anyway, I guess the main point is: Expand upon your answer vis-à-vis the change to the environmental assessment process and the delivery of the project.

Ms. Joyce Hall: Okay. Thank you for the question, Mr. Blais.

I understand that early works can be designed and built, and then there was a list of things that constitute early works, including station construction. I thought that's a pretty major project. What if an environmental impact assessment finds after construction has begun on a subway station that there's a problem? I don't know; there could be interference with water or electricity or that you're on an important Indigenous site, and the whole thing has to be torn down. Someone, I believe, in the standing committee said it's like ready, fire, aim. You shouldn't start your works until you've finished your environmental assessment, in my opinion. Apparently, it's been discouraged for decades, that kind of practice, trying to get ahead of an environmental assessment.

I might also add that our arguments about congestion, no one has any—I certainly won't dispute that as a commuter. I commuted to the suburbs at Seneca College for many years. But it's not a reason for poor planning. In fact, as we know, the projects that have been well planned and shovel-ready have actually been stalled more by political and financial processes than anything else, not environmental assessments.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now move on to our last round of questions by the government for seven minutes, please. MPP Martin, go ahead.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Ms. Hall, for your presentation. It's interesting that you should talk so much about democracy and representative government. I did a BA in political science and history at McGill and a master's in political science, in fact, which was about democracy and freedom, under the auspices of Charles

Taylor, a great Canadian philosopher and thinker and a wonderful man besides that. So I am very, very passionate about democracy in Ontario and in Canada. I know all of my colleagues share that passion. In fact, that's why people run—to make a difference and to try to do the right thing. We certainly are motivated to do the right thing.

As I'm sure you know, our system of government is a first-past-the-post system, and it's worked amazingly well for 150-plus years—where are we at now? Do the math. But it's worked amazingly well all that time and given us a very stable form of government, which has given us generally very good government in Canada. That's why we're all so proud to be Canadians and so proud to be Ontarians, and I'm very proud of that tradition.

I do think that when it comes to an evidence basis for decision-making, before we junk this great system of democracy that we have for some fictional utopia, we should be very, very careful because other jurisdictions which have more proportional systems have very unstable governments. I think of France and Israel as examples. I certainly wouldn't want to have that kind of instability, particularly when it comes projects like this, which are big projects. As you pointed out, political planning has been part of the problem sometimes. That's why we're so delighted that we've been able to reach a historic agreement, with all three levels of government supporting these projects and supporting going forward with this plan. All of them are ready to go, and that's why we want to get building, because, as you pointed out, congestion is a major problem in the city of Toronto and it's costing us so much time.

1440

My riding is the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, so we've had a recent project here. The time it's taken to construct the Eglinton LRT, as you know, has been a lot. So this bill is actually directed specifically at reducing the time that it takes to construct. What it's doing is common-sense kinds of things. We had a previous witness who said, "I don't know why those things aren't done already," and I agree—coordinating utility locations and coordinating corridor permits so that we don't have projects that are tripping over each other. Basically, what we're trying to do is get this line built so that people in my riding, for example, at Eglinton station, or people at Bloor and Yonge or people at Union Station are not so crowded.

It's a safety issue as well. Line 1 is just so overcrowded. This is relief to that crowding. My understanding is, this line will have 17% less crowding at Bloor and Yonge, 13% less crowding at Union Station and 15% less crowding at Eglinton station.

I think these are really important objectives. We're making these decisions based on evidence. The minister will, of course, listen to residents who have concerns about expropriations. It's not that there's no hearing—it's just that the hearing of necessity that's currently allowed, and which we're trying to change for this thing, is a process which, frankly, is taking an extra five months per person who has a hearing, I think. It is a significant delay. If this bill is passed, we have provisions to allow the minister to

have an alternate, streamlined process for receiving and considering comments from owners of proposed properties. So there isn't no hearing; it's just that it's hard to dispute that a project is necessary for a linear transit line—because it's going in a straight line. So having a hearing of whether my property is needed is not necessary. It's not that people can't have hearings. Of course, they will have compensation. The compensation will be fair, and they can appeal if they don't like the compensation.

You mentioned a number of other issues, including environmental assessments. We're not getting rid of environmental assessments. We're keeping environmental processes in place. And already on the lines we're talking about, I think three of four of them have already had full environmental assessments. So the question is: How much assessing do we need to do, and have we done enough? There has got to be an end to some of these things at some point. But nothing in the tools we're proposing will change the outcomes of the environmental assessment process. It's just to streamline the process.

I should note that the projects also have to comply with other environmental legislation, including the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act.

Can I ask you: Don't you think a number of these things sound like good democracy, good planning, good evidence-based decision-making and really, frankly, a good way to proceed to get transit built in Ontario?

Ms. Joyce Hall: Okay. Thank you for mentioning Charles Taylor, Ms. Martin. We'll have to have a conversation sometime about proportional representation.

I'm very pleased to hear you offer reassurances. I would feel better if people had the regular recourse that they have always had. We haven't seen demonstrated the necessity to shortcut hearings of necessity.

The thing is, it's the fact that it's ministerial discretion. Of course, that's going to make anybody nervous. What exactly does the citizen have on their side, if you like?

Let's see, what was the other thing I wanted to say there?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): I am very, very sorry, but unfortunately we are out of time. Thank you so much, Ms. Hall, for your presentation today.

Just a reminder: The deadline to send in any written submissions is 6 p.m. on June 10.

As we do not have our next presenter, the committee will now recess until 3:30 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1445 to 1530.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Welcome back to our public hearings on Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts.

Before we move on to our next presenter, I'd like to welcome MPP Rasheed. If he could please introduce himself, state his riding as well as state the city from which he is calling in today.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Good afternoon, Chair. It's MPP Kaleed Rasheed. I'm calling from Mississauga, Ontario.

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

MS. B.J. DANYLCHUK

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We have with us B.J. Danylchuk, our next presenter. Welcome. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, and you may begin by stating your name for the record.

Ms. B.J. Danylchuk: Thank you very much. My name is B.J. Danylchuk. I am a resident of the neighbourhood that is affected by the Ontario Line. I live just below the Danforth, on Pape, but I'm also a taxpayer that is affected by all of the lines and the whole initiative here. The third part of my background that I feel like I need to tell you about, because it gives context for my remarks, is that I have spent decades, actually, working with senior management teams across the globe on major strategic initiatives, all the large-scale changes associated with that and all the related designs and layers of designs and implementations to ultimately, after years, give effect to those kinds of major, major projects. So this project looks really familiar to me. Given that I have decades of experience with these kinds of things, I thought that I would bring some thoughts forward that may be of assistance to you.

Let me get right to the point: This initiative has been under way for a couple of years now. There's sort of a plan, there's sort of a budget, there's sort of various things, and it's moving forward in the way that these things do. That was all fine and well, and then we had something called a pandemic that came to visit and to stay with us. That has made a major change around the globe for all the people and all the businesses, and all these kinds of projects. Every business in the world is rethinking: "How am I going to operate in these new environments so that I can actually have a business?" And every business that has a big initiative like this that involves billions of dollars and multiple years is rethinking it—not rethinking about whether to do it or not, but saying, "We have to revisit the plans. We have to revisit the whole thing, to think through what effect the pandemic requirements now have on our operations going forward, so that we can true up our plans."

I know that coming to you guys two or three years into this and saying, "Hi, guess what? You're going to have to rethink all of this stuff right now because of this intervening event," is probably not the most favourite thing that you're hearing right now. But let me give you some examples, some low-hanging fruit that has been popping up for me—because initially, when the first thought of this came into my mind, I thought, "Oh, no. Please, no." But there is substantial risk and there is substantial opportunity in doing this.

Let me give you a couple of examples just to start to flood your thought process here. One example is really simple. It's called, "The plans that we have assume that we have a transit system that's like any other large, public

space," with lots of people moving through. The assumption, I guarantee you, was that, yes, people can be like this, shoulder to shoulder, in a pinch. Yes, we can have tight kinds of places for people to go through. All of that affects the kind of throughput and the volumes that you expect a system to do, and all of those assumptions are no longer valid. So have a group of people revisit the parts of the plan and think about the physical space, and please, let them think about how to design the floors and the walls so that there is some indication of a pathway and spacing and things like that. Because I sure hope that whenever these initiatives come to pass and are implemented—I don't expect to see little extra stickers and paint and pieces of tape on floors and walls to help people find their way. We can lead with the thoughts about this, and there are lots of examples in the world about designing public spaces for that.

But the real benefit of starting with that comes with this: As they're thinking through all of that, how do we flow people through, they're going to be looking at those plans and thinking about noticing where the choke points are—the choke points in the design, which weren't a choke point but are, for sure, now, that will dramatically affect the volume of people that can actually be in the system at any one time and how they move through. They will be able to come back and say, "We can make these kinds of changes to the physical design—move this wall a bit here, change the curve there—and we could increase the throughput and the use of this system dramatically."

That's the kind of information that I, as a taxpayer, want to be coming out now, because the throughput on this system and how it's used, going forward, dramatically affects the whole financial structure of all of this, of all of our transport and everything else. It needs to be done. Every other business, with this kind of project, with the kinds of major physical environments that are involved in moving people through, are revisiting all of their plans in this way, and we need to as well.

I'll give you another example. Let's talk about disinfecting. Right now, we have to disinfect things far more deeply and far more frequently than ever before. Yes, there are people in all the transit systems right now in full PPE with machines going along and doing their work, and they're doing it great—highly labour-intensive; highly material-intensive. As a taxpayer, please don't tell me that that's how we're going to be doing it for ever and a day. We have an opportunity, with all of these projects, to sit down with the proof and say, "Figure out how to make disinfection happen easily, quick, fast, no-touch, automatic."

Lots of businesses are doing this, and all the technology is already there—things like UV lights and ozone and automated stuff. I know that there are probably the little nooks and crannies in the designs that can't be dealt with that way, but even if 80% of it, the usual 80/20 rule, gets to move all of that through, it makes a huge difference. Let's think about this. That's my money, your money and everybody else's money, and a whole lot of efficiency.

Let me bring up the last one I need to bring up, which was the first one that came to mind. This is about public

and green space. I went to the public meetings in January and February, and I heard lots of people talk about public and green space and the need to have that space, whether it's with their own private space in their own backyards that was going to get wiped out or whether it was just having access. At the time, people said, "Yes, that's really important, but money always trumps that."

But we have a new situation. It is a new world. That old plan and that old set of how the trade-offs were managed, I think, can give way to some public health requirements. In fact, now, with the light of day, you can look at public and green space as actually a strategic advantage, an asset, for cities. You know that right now, because if you look around the world, it isn't just Toronto but lots of major cities around the world have come to realize that they don't have enough green space and public space, because to satisfy the needs to keep their people healthy and therefore productive—and of course keeping the people in the city productive and healthy makes the city healthy and productive. As our Premier has said, the city is the economic engine of the country, not just the province. But if we do that, then it makes it far more easy for people to be productive and everything else. So I look at it and, looking at the green space and the public space that those above ground portions of the Ontario Line, for example, will wipe out, now, with fresh eyes—I'm looking at it and saying that we have a strategic asset, and actually we don't have enough of it, so we're having to do all this extraordinary stuff to make it work for our citizens. Why would we now effectively wipe those out—pretty much most of that, certainly in the southern part of Riverdale and actually a fair amount of that up in Thorncliffe Park as well? Why would we do that? It makes no sense at all, especially when you have an option of saying, "We'll just put the transit lines down in the ground." People will say, "It costs more money." Well, how much more money? Nobody has actually done the budget.

I come down to the last point: This is ultimately a business decision. There are some basic business practices around large-scale stuff, and one of them is that you actually cost the alternatives right from the get-go, and keep on doing it along the line. I find it extremely troubling that this project has gotten this far basically on the back of an envelope and an assumption that one cost that was estimated for something else would probably do for something else, without any real numbers being run. As a taxpayer—nobody is going to give anybody any brownie points for doing stuff fast if it ends up being suboptimal and ends up generating a whole bunch of extraordinary costs going forward.

I need to invoke something. This is the time of bravery. These are big times and momentous times and everything else, and when you think back on the history of the city and this province, 100 years ago there was the same big conflagration about a big transit project. It was called the Bloor Street viaduct. There were civic leaders there that insisted upon building the second deck, and the second deck ended up being the hugest gift that all of us could get. It made transit possible, going forward. Please, channel a

bit of R.C. Harris in yourself and do a favour for all of us. Treat it like a business. Do the reviews. Make it be right.

1540

Thank you. I'm ready for your questions, and I will file a summary of my written remarks for you by the end of tomorrow.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We will begin our questions with our independent Liberal member, Mr. Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much for your presentation today. I don't have any questions. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): All right. We will now give the floor to the government members for seven minutes. Go ahead, Ms. Hogarth.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you very much for your passionate deputation this afternoon. It's really important that we have these discussions, and it's great we are able to have this format, even though we have COVID-19, as you mentioned during statement.

Last week, I had a meeting with Minister Mulroney. Before we go and talk a little bit about the bill that's being discussed today—because we were talking about transit and transit riders and people feeling safe on transit—she assured me that this is something that they work on on a weekly basis. They're always talking about making sure it's clean and how we make people more comfortable on the transit system. Those are discussions that are held every week with MTO and the transit system because, you're right, it is a new normal. This is something that—well, there will be books written on it—but we certainly hoped it wasn't going to be happening during our time. So I just want to assure you that those conversations are being held right now. That's not part of this legislation, but things we should always think about. Those conversations are happening right now because they have to, because all of our health is so important.

We want to make sure people do feel safe when they go on public transit. We want to make sure that people use public transit. For a lot of people living in Toronto, that is their only mode of transportation, unless they walk or bike.

That's why this bill is so important. It's because we need to improve our public transit for people. It has to be there for everyone, affordable and safe. And "safe" is the new word of the day, because we always knew about the safety issues, but the virus-causing issue was a little bit different—let's say four months ago—then what's happened over the last three months.

So I thank you for bringing those comments up. You are the first to bring them up during this hearing.

We are actually in the very early stages of planning these four routes. That's why this bill is so important—because we want to get transit moving quickly.

You shared some ideas with us today. But how do we as a government and how does Metrolinx—how do they go out and work with your community to make sure that we can address your concerns while we look at building transit faster?

Ms. B.J. Danylchuk: Thank you for your comments and for the question.

There are really standard ways of engagement, of recognizing who are the right—I use the word “constituencies” and I want to say I’m not talking about parliamentary constituencies. I’m talking about recognizing that there are different—“interest groups” are actually almost too narrow a band to say. For any large-scale, multi-dimensional event like this that we try to do, there are lots of people who have involvement.

The best rules of thumb are, if you try to do it, bring all the interested people from all the interested parties together with some clear facilitation and guidelines, and work it out. There is no reason why this has to be: “I talked to this person and then I talked and then I talked” and all of a sudden it’s five years. Put them all in in the room.

The real challenge actually is that coming up with the end-state design is a challenge in itself. But figuring out how to actually design the implementation road map of how to get to that place is usually the most complex thing. And it’s usually the thing that is not valued as much, until way after the fact when it’s a huge mess and everybody is mad at each other and then you have to wade in and fix things and get things back on track.

There are standard ways. My understanding of the structure is that Metrolinx is basically in the role of being the project people for the government in this regard, and moving it forward. I would expect that Metrolinx would—and if they don’t, they should—be having people with similar skills to mine, and there are those people available on the planet who do this, who bring the right folks together.

I listened in on some of the other presentations earlier today, just to see how the flavour was, how the room was, and what struck me was that there’s a whole lot of people basically saying, “Please let us be part of the process,” and somehow, despite the best of intentions, we’ve managed to not make that happen. There are ways.

Christine, do you want to have a coffee or a longer meeting and whatever? We’ll talk about it. I’m happy to pass on some best practices.

That’s doable, but the fact that people don’t do that—when you look at large-scale projects in the corporate world, where they say, “We have large-scale change projects,” they assess after the fact that 20% of them—27% was the last number—actually worked. All the rest failed despite all of the everything. Usually it’s because of things like, we didn’t take the time to think it through before, we didn’t involve the right people along the way, and we didn’t just keep it—having the tolerance for the messiness of that process and knowing that it has a destination. When you do it that way, it works, and when you don’t, I’m the taxpayer, saying, “Oh, God, please, no.”

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Well, it’s not just you; I think we’re also the taxpayers who say, “Oh, no.” That’s part of our disappointment with the extra three years and the overruns for the Eglinton Crosstown. That’s really why this bill is so important. We want to find the faults of what happened during that process. Ottawa is another example of something that did not go well. So we really want to find those problems and fix them, because we are all

taxpayers. Nobody wants to spend extra money—and it’s not a little bit of money; it’s a lot of money. So I hear you. We all hear you. We don’t want to spend any more money. And I’ll tell you, Doug Ford hears you. He doesn’t want to spend any more money—especially wasting extra money on things that it shouldn’t be wasted on. So we hear you loud and clear.

I would love to take you up on that coffee. Do you know how much I would love to sit outside and have a coffee with somebody right now?

Ms. B.J. Danylchuk: You can keep your six feet of distance, and we can have a coffee. I can be on one side of a tree in Queen’s Park, and you can be on the other. That’s fine.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: We appreciate your comments today and your passion for bringing these things forward. Some of the things this bill is going to cover is looking at when they do a project, just working together—

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We’re out of time.

We will now move on to the official opposition, and we will begin with MPP Tabuns.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ms. Danylchuk, thank you very much for appearing today and making, I have to say, a very enjoyable presentation. I’m looking forward to Hansard.

My colleague has a number of questions to ask. I have a quick one. You said that it is unusual for businesses not to cost alternative options when they’re assessing really big projects. Can you speak a bit more to that and why it’s not a good idea to neglect costing the options?

Ms. B.J. Danylchuk: How do you know it’s a good decision unless you have comparators? Everybody has a boss. You may be the CEO of a multinational corporation worth zillions of dollars, but you still have a board, and they still have majority shareholders. So I could say, “I’m going to spend \$11 billion on this,” and they’ll say, “What were the alternatives? Could you accomplish the same thing in a different way?” “Yes. We could have done this, and it would have been this. Here are the trade-offs on that.” Then you have context for the decisions. But having one number and no others, especially when there’s so much heat around above ground, below ground—the assumption of just saying, “It’s way too much money.”

When I was in discussions at the information sessions and I talked to the senior person who was in charge of the project for Metrolinx—I talk to senior people and I pick their brains about things—one of the things that came up that made me realize is that, from a costing point of view, there’s a blending of some things here, and some of the costs could be about what’s being done for GO Transit and what’s being done for these four specific projects. As the costings go on—I learned a whole lot from the CFOs I work with—you have to make sure that you have those things in separate buckets, because they may be interdependent, but they are not automatically—you have to do one if you have to do the other. That will make it way easier to make informed decisions and to explain why you’re spending the money you do to people like me. If you don’t have the numbers, how can you explain clearly?

1550

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much. I'll turn it over to my colleague.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to join my colleagues MPP Tabuns and MPP Hogarth in saying thank you for your presentation.

I want to relate to you what I've tried to do on the committee, as we talk to folks, is to give them the sense of the Ottawa experience. My colleague MPP Blais is also part of this committee. What we had here is a catastrophic failure. Earlier in our conversations—I'm not sure if you tuned in—MPP Blais mentioned that there were no cost overruns. I would submit to you that having to hire buses to sit in the parking lot of our city baseball stadium, at a cost of \$95,000 a week, strikes me as a cost overrun for a failed light rail system.

I want to read to you—something you can react to—a letter that was written to our office here in Ottawa Centre by a commuter from MPP Blais's riding.

The letter reads:

"My commute before LRT construction was about 30 minutes each way: one bus, Orléans to downtown. During LRT construction, it was about 40 to 50 minutes.... Now it is over an hour each way. And that's with no door jams or absentee buses.

"The city has stated that it was known that the commute would be longer. If so, it was not widely known. No one I've talked to had any inkling the commute would be" this much longer. When I talked to then-councillor Blais, he "informed me that the commute would be more 'dependable.' Well, pre-LRT chaos, my commute was ... pretty dependable. And I'm not finding my bus any more dependable now from" its current station.

"To my ear, the city's statements are mostly spin and excuses, showing a lack of full transparency throughout the process. It appears that the winners are the drivers in the downtown core with no buses to contend with" any longer. "I frankly can't imagine anyone ... signing up to a \$2-billion investment for a longer, more miserable commute."

What's your reaction to someone from MPP Blais's riding who writes something like that in the aftermath of a failed LRT project involving billions of dollars?

Ms. B.J. Danylchuk: My heart goes out to him, and I'm really glad that I don't live in his neighbourhood and have that commute because I would be perhaps less civil in my writing of a letter.

I used to work with one of my friends as a consultant and he said, "If you actually don't agree on where you're going, any road will take you there." If you don't have real clear metrics—not just, "All right, we want to build some transit, eh." You want to have some metrics that say, "These are the performance expectations we expect out of the system." Right? We expect it to work in these kinds of ways with these kinds of timings and this kind of stuff, because all of that affects—back to the issue of cost: Until you know what performance numbers you want to hit for

anything that you're building, you can't possibly cost it and you can't possibly design it.

I'll use an analogy. I've dealt a lot with technology people. If you talk to a person who is in charge of a network and you say, "It's running at 99% capacity, but I want to get to 99.9%. That'll just be a little bit extra." And they say, "Actually, that will cost you as much we spent to get to 99%, to get to that extra point nine," just because that's what it costs to get there. You have to know what you're going to get to.

Besides, the Ottawa failure is a tragedy for the province and for the community. I went to law school in Ottawa; I know that community. I feel for it. It's bad from the word go.

Mr. Joel Harden: Bad from the word go.

Ms. B.J. Danylchuk: It's really hard to succeed if you don't know where you're going.

Mr. Joel Harden: What I would invite you to watch as this unfolds, with the brilliant brain you showcased for us this afternoon that you have, are the people who are close to the process. What we've seen here with Boxfish consulting and with other insiders is that there has been a lot of money for people close to the steering of a failed process.

In your closing remarks, could you give the government some thought as to who they bring into this process? I would hope you would agree with me that having our public officials, who are paid well to oversee public projects—I would like to see them in a role, and not consultants with ties to political parties.

Ms. B.J. Danylchuk: The structuring of any major initiative is really both an art and a science, because what you need to make sure is that the people who are accountable, who can make the decisions, have oversight and visibility, but that the people who are actually—there are three layers. There's that strategic layer, there are the people who actually implement it—because usually you have extra teams who come in and build things—and then there are people who operate.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. I'm so sorry, but we are out of time. Thank you very much for your presentation today.

Members of committee, unfortunately, our next presenter has cancelled at the last minute. So at this time, I must call a recess once again. The committee will resume at 4:30 p.m. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1555 to 1630.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Welcome back to our public hearings on Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts.

MS. CLAUDIA MIO

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We have with us our next presenter, Ms. Claudia Mio. Welcome. You will have 10 minutes for your presentation this afternoon, and you may begin by stating your name for the record.

Ms. Claudia Mio: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Claudia Mio. I live at 36 Pepler in East York. May I begin?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): You may begin.

Ms. Claudia Mio: Great. I'm going to have some notes that I'll refer to here, but I'm going to look up as much as possible.

Thank you for allowing me to present in this committee and have the opportunity to express my thoughts and concerns about Bill 171.

I want to add that this is not only my voice, but it's also the concerns and opinions of my neighbours on Pepler Avenue, about 100 families. We discuss often what's happening in our city, and I would like to speak on behalf of them as well.

Please know right off the bat that I am pro-transit. We all want better and more transit that helps us commute throughout our days.

A little bit about my background: My husband and I purchased our home in 1993. It's a 90-year-old, two-storey detached classic brick Toronto house, and we've lived in it for most of our adult lives, 27 years. Our daughter has also grown up in this house, in this quiet and peaceful neighbourhood here in East York. We live exactly one street east of Pape, north of O'Connor, so the proposed Ontario Line would run behind our house.

We love this community and we love this neighbourhood. We shop at the stores on Pape Avenue, we use the library and the recreational centre. We walk and ride our bikes in the lower Don, Crothers Woods trails. We love that we can access nature just outside our front door, basically, and we really marvel at that urban nature that's on our doorstep. Pape Avenue is not a thoroughfare. It's a busy, vibrant, community-used avenue filled with neighbourhoods of houses and families.

This brings me to Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act. When we look at this bill, we are very concerned, and frankly, astonished. We're looking for a bill that shows that there's partnership with our community in this bill towards the Ontario Line. And I keep looking out my window, because it's going to be right over there.

We don't want a bill that divides us and forces through a project without careful analysis and due diligence. We believe that this bill gives sweeping powers to the ministry and Metrolinx and goes against, honestly, our democratic rights.

I'd like to give an example: the access-to-land part of the bill, which removes homeowners' or businesses' ability to request a hearing of necessity. We strongly disagree with this. Every citizen is entitled to their day in court. We pay our taxes and we have the right for our voices to be heard.

Another element of this bill that greatly concerns me is the ability to enter lands, which allows Metrolinx to enter lands near the project—for example, for soil testing or removing one of our trees—without requiring a permit or consent from the property owner. That, to me, doesn't speak about a partnership or consultation, and it has zero consideration.

By far the most shocking and extraordinary part of Bill 171 is the proposal to make changes to the Environmental Assessment Act. These changes would allow early works to be completed before an environmental impact assessment report is completed. How can that happen? How is that proper planning and smart managing of a project? What if, after the early works are completed, it's discovered that there are major, or even minor, environmental and safety issues? Environmental assessments are supposed to foresee the unforeseen, aren't they? How can EAs be seen as a delay? How much more money is going to be needed potentially to backtrack? How many other delays are there going to be?

We all know the importance of due diligence—dotting the i's and crossing the t's—before taking on an immense, huge project like this that is going to affect millions of lives. This bill is going to be rushed for that process, and the safeguards are going to be taken away. Please, can I ask each of you on this panel: Would any of you buy a house or a property sight unseen? That's how this is feeling right now. You're asking us to trust you and this process on blind faith. When you take away established and solid safeguards, that's how it feels.

I also want to mention something about the transit planning assessment process, the TPAP. There's evidence that the TPAP has operated in the past, and I don't understand why that's not sufficient now. It seems that the proposed transit measures in Bill 171 are fixes looking for problems that may not even exist. I don't understand why the TPAP, under the EAA, can't continue to enable this transit project to work fairly, equitably and effectively.

In closing, I'd like to make an analogy to COVID-19 and how Premier Doug Ford has been a thoughtful leader. He made that very hard decision to not send our children back to school because, he said, he didn't want to take a risk, and I respected him for that decision. He showed caring and empathy and humanity. It wasn't political, and he didn't stoop to partisanship, and he showed that he cared about his Ontario citizens.

So I'm asking: How can this government and ministry take such a huge risk by not adequately verifying before rushing in to meet timelines, risking environmental issues, unknown costs, lack of community consideration, and risking the hope—I really hope you guys are understanding this part—for a healthy and respected government-citizen relationship, because we need that?

We want our transit to be something that we're really proud of for generations. We don't want it to be a mess or a joke or, worse, a waste of a golden opportunity to do it right. If the timelines don't work, adjust them. No one is going to fault taking precautions when there is so much at stake.

This government's words during COVID-19 have been: "No one will be left behind," and, "We're all in this together." Are we? Bill 171 doesn't feel that way.

1640

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much, Ms. Mio. We will begin our rounds of questions this

afternoon with seven minutes allotted to the members of government. Go ahead, Mr. Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Ms. Mio, for that presentation. In terms of your presentation, I took some notes to make sure that I ask you the right questions to have this dialogue.

Before I do that, I just want to bring quick points. In terms of the community engagement, Ms. Mio, Metrolinx is accountable. They are supposed to do community engagement and consultation as a key part of Metrolinx's planning and Metrolinx's designing process. For example, Metrolinx will be conducting many outreach activities, such as open public houses or community pop-ups, and community canvassing, including regional town hall meetings. Also, there's a newsletter that they're going to send out to communities in a regular fashion. You can also sign up to receive those newsletters at www.metrolinx.com/ontarioline. So there is a way to engage as well as a way to get updates, in both ways. These all—Metrolinx has to follow. These online town halls have to happen. That's one thing I really want to mention.

I will move on to my next point. In terms of the environmental analysis, Metrolinx is accountable and committed to protecting the environment while delivering on these important priorities, and Metrolinx will share the results of the impact assessment, as designed and that are confirmed, with the public. They have to. They're not compromising environmental analysis. That is something that we mandate, for Metrolinx to follow these procedures. There is no way; they cannot skip it. There is no compromise on environment, for sure.

When it comes to entering the land, we believe, as a government, that legislation includes appropriate checks and balances, and places fair and reasonable conditions on access. These are the first processes for these things. Also, anyone entering a private property would be required to provide advance notice, negotiating time.

I can keep going. There are more rules that they have to follow, including Metrolinx. They are still going to respect property rights, negotiate in good faith and treat people fairly. Again, as I mentioned—I don't want to take up the time going through all these things, but I particularly mention about these three things: Community engagement will be happening; environmental analysis is number one—there's no compromise on that; and when it comes to entering land, they have to go through the procedure and negotiate in good faith.

What would you like the government to consider when negotiating with property owners and occupants to reach an amicable agreement before exercising the government's ability to enter land? What is your thought on that? What is your proposed solution?

Ms. Claudia Mio: Can you repeat that question? I was thinking how I'd like to respond to some of the other things you said prior, but what was the actual question you had for me?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: What would you like government to consider when negotiating with property owners and occupants to reach an amicable agreement

before exercising the government's ability to enter the land? What is your proposed solution for government to consider when negotiating in good faith?

Ms. Claudia Mio: Well, as a property owner, I want to know what the plan is. I want to know the overall plan of what is being affected in our neighbourhood. Then I want to have the ability to, yes, negotiate and consult and say, "Why is it necessary to run that through here? Can we not move something over here?"

Again, I'm pro-transit. I'm looking for a win-win. But the idea of someone—and the way I read it in this bill was that no consent is needed to enter on my property and move or do whatever they need to do to complete this project. I want complete consultation. All of us as citizens deserve that.

Just to go back to your first comment: I have attended, I believe, two of those community meetings, and they were very disappointing and a waste of time. There were placards set around the room in both of the meetings I attended—identical—and people buzzing around from Metrolinx who didn't have answers to any questions. So that was very disheartening.

Yes, I am very excited to hear about news that's going on, and my name is on the Metrolinx—I wrote my email and my address down. I have never received, ever, an email from Metrolinx.

We feel like we don't know what's going on. That's why I say it's like blind trust. And this is huge. It's huge.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We have one minute remaining.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Ms. Mio. You also mentioned you want to comment on the environmental analysis. Is there anything that you want to comment about the environmental analysis? Do you have any questions on that?

Ms. Claudia Mio: Again, I don't have questions. I'm just saying that I completely disagree with doing away with that or making any changes to the Environmental Assessment Act. It's there to protect us. It's a safeguard. Starting work before we have the answers to what's being done completely goes against any type of rational thinking.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We will now move on to the official opposition, beginning with MPP Tabuns, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ms. Mio, thanks for joining us this afternoon. That is a very nice little stretch of Pepler you live on. It's got a real community feel to it. I'm glad you're here, speaking on behalf of the street. I'm going to be sharing time with my colleague.

This question of expropriation is one that we've gone back and forth on all day. The government has said a number of times, "Well, yes, the right of appeal for a hearing of necessity is taken away, but the minister has the ability, at her discretion or his discretion, to grant a hearing." Do you and the people on your street have confidence that that discretion will be exercised in a way that will be protective of you?

Ms. Claudia Mio: No, I don't have confidence in that, because this bill is about fast-tracking transit and getting it done. This has to be a fair process and we need to feel that we're listened to, and I don't believe that we are. I don't have a lot of faith right now, and it's very frightening.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you. That was a straight-forward response.

Chair, I believe my colleague has questions.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Go ahead, Ms. Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Ms. Mio, for coming in and sharing your neighbourhood's concerns. I can tell by how you're speaking how much you care about the life that you've built there and your home and family.

You haven't been here all day, but one of the tensions that has come up is this idea that communities need to sacrifice for the greater good.

1650

Ms. Claudia Mio: Yes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I don't necessarily think that we need to choose between sacrificing communities in order for there to be a greater good. I agree with you: I think there is a win-win to achieve here, where transit can be built in a respectful way and it can be built right.

The question I have for you is: How do you want Metrolinx and the Ontario government to treat you throughout this transit construction process?

Ms. Claudia Mio: I want to be treated, again, fairly—and that my democratic rights are being listened to. I want there to be more open and transparent communication to exactly what is going on in our neighbourhood. I feel like things are just popping up and happening. I can tell you that probably two weeks ago—I don't know what happened. Someone came through here on our street and spray-painted numbers in front of all of our houses. We have no idea what that is. I don't know who did that. What does it mean? Is it related to the Ontario Line that's going to be here? Are they going to be drilling and doing assessments here? There's zero communication—zero.

Ms. Jessica Bell: That must be very concerning.

Ms. Claudia Mio: It is.

Ms. Jessica Bell: One issue that we are following very closely, MPP Tabuns and myself, is the decision by the Ontario government to move the planning process—the route the train will take, where stations will be located—moving much of that over to the private sector to decide. Do you have an opinion on that?

Ms. Claudia Mio: Yes, I do. Again, the idea of transparency goes right out the window. This is transit—our transit. Citizens, community need to believe and know what is happening is being properly and ethically done without anything, as they say, done behind closed doors. It has to be all above board. Delays happen when things are not done properly—and I'm talking about the big picture here. That's why delays happen: when it's not done right. Do it right. People will wait for something that's done properly, fairly, honestly—no shortcuts and not behind closed doors.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Are there specific amendments or changes to the bill that you would like us to introduce?

Ms. Claudia Mio: Well, I have to say that if this is indeed going to happen and go through, an amendment I would like to see is the minister to appoint an individual, someone who is going to be in our face and we are going to be in their face, so that that communication is ongoing. Just the way it is right now with COVID-19, we've got government officials, including our Prime Minister, who are speaking to us every day and letting us know what's happening. So when someone's been appointed to talk to us and tell us what happens and I know they're there for us—not just now, but after this line is built and we're having problems with our 100-year-old house because of whatever issues have happened—I want the name, the face and the person of who is going to deal with it. That is what I would like to see.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. Ms. Mio, do you have an opinion on what route you would like the train line to take through your neighbourhood?

Ms. Claudia Mio: That's a big question. Again, I'm pro-transit, but I think so many of us don't really know what the best route is anymore. It's confusing. It's last minute. There's no really confident evidence to make me feel assured. What I can say is, the way it's routed right now, which is underground right behind my house, then coming above ground and going off Minton, off into never-never land across the valley, and disruption and appropriations and God knows what else to the Don Valley and the trees and everything else there—I don't understand why it can't be put alongside or twinned alongside the bridge that goes across the Don Valley, the Leaside Bridge. If the money is going to be spent, do it properly. Think long-term. Let's do something here that we can be proud of, that everyone who's involved in has put their name on and can be proud of and not embarrassed about.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for coming in and speaking to us.

Ms. Claudia Mio: You're welcome. Thank you very, very much for hearing from me and for listening to me—and please, I hope good things are going to come.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now move on to six minutes of questions by Mr. Blais, the independent Liberal member.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much for Zooming in this afternoon. Clearly you have some passion for this project.

I appreciate that you don't currently have the best thoughts about Metrolinx because of the lack of communications. I'm wondering if there are steps that you think Metrolinx could take to improve that relationship with you and with your neighbours.

Ms. Claudia Mio: Sorry, it's Stephen, is it?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Yes.

Ms. Claudia Mio: Thanks, Stephen. Again, it goes back to that communication and that transparency. Every meeting I've attended, everything I've personally heard or witnessed or experienced—I feel they're just there to get it done, and at any cost. The communication is so

scattered, and we don't believe what we're hearing. I need evidence and communication that it's an entity that I can trust, and I just don't feel that way. None of us feel that way.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I guess the question is, what could get you to feeling that way? Increased communications, I appreciate, but what other types of information or acts do you need?

Ms. Claudia Mio: Outreach: someone walking into our community. When there's an election going on here, there are people knocking on the door and speaking to us, and not only at those times. There are certain elected officials who do it more than that, and they care. I want to know that they care, and this is not just to push something through and we're just the casualty along the way. I don't know if you know this neighbourhood, Stephen, or if you come through here. Pape Avenue is not Eglinton. It's a street.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Sure. I can't say that I know your neighbourhood. I live in Ottawa, and I think that's, in fairness, part of the challenge with this whole process—that typically transit projects like this would be the responsibility of city government, which knows neighbourhoods a lot better than representatives from across a province as large as Ontario. So I think I'm not entirely convinced that this is the best way to build public transit either.

But what I'm trying to get to the heart of is, if this is the method that the government has chosen to do this, how can this legislation give you the confidence as a resident that it's going to be done properly and safely and evidence-based, as you were suggesting before.

Thank you very much for spending some time with us, and if you have anything you would like to add before time runs out, please feel free to do so.

Ms. Claudia Mio: Thank you. I wish you weren't in Ottawa, and the next time you're here, please come to the neighbourhood.

But what I wanted to say is, yes, the other thing, again, that could be done is—this bill. This bill in itself is like another nail in the coffin. When I heard about this bill, I said, "Are you kidding me?" It's just pushing things through and doing it fast, and that looks dirty to me. It doesn't look trustworthy. It's not. It makes me lose confidence when I see something like that.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Sure. And just real quick, we've had a couple of other presentations from people who are part of something called the Pape Area Concerned Citizens for Transit. Is that a group that you're familiar with or participate in?

Ms. Claudia Mio: I know them, yes. They are in this neighbourhood.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Okay, wonderful. Thanks very much for your time today. I appreciate it.

Ms. Claudia Mio: You're welcome. Thank you for your time.

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

1700

MR. LAIRD McMURRAY

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now be moving on to our next presenter. I believe we have Mr. Laird McMurray with us. Welcome.

Mr. Laird McMurray: Hello.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): You will have 10 minutes for your presentation, and you may begin by stating your name for the record.

Mr. Laird McMurray: Laird McMurray.

I just have a brief history of my time in Riverdale, which I'll read for you. Our business is on McGee Street. The first time I encountered McGee Street was in 1977, and I lived in a house there that was over 100 years old at that time. I moved to Toronto in 1974 to attend theatre school at Ryerson, which was a diploma program back then, and pursue work in the city. I also worked for the Canadian National railroad as a brakeman, as theatre work was slim. At that time, the tracks above McGee saw all manner of transport. There were a lot of freight trains as well as passenger trains. I had many trips over the railroad tracks and in the rail yards in the Riverdale area, as well as the tracks adjacent to McGee, so I'm very familiar with that corridor.

In the summer of 1979, I met a person who suggested that the film industry was a field I was suited for, and I have never looked back. Since that time, my career in the industry has evolved, and we now run the biggest special effects shop in Toronto. Our business has been located in over eight locations in Riverdale over 40 years. It has become a desirable neighbourhood, at this point. It became a magnet back then for people in the film industry, as there was a lot of space available to rent, to buy, to lease. Studios, support companies and crews moved in. That was in the 1980s, and it was possible to do that then. The areas accommodated that film work up until this point.

The repurposing of empty space for the needs of the film industry has really been quite a boon in the neighbourhood. The industry now employs more than 30,000 people and brings over \$2 billion of production to Toronto every year.

In the past decades, as Riverdale has gentrified and construction has been unprecedented, the available space and properties became rarer and expensive, which has also forced the film industry west to Etobicoke, north near the airport and to industrial areas in Scarborough.

About 15 years ago, our company found the perfect home on McGee Street, centrally located to all our clients, who, of course, for the most part, work within about a mile of our shop. We employ 14 people at the moment, but if we include the union members we support with equipment and logistics, that quickly exceeds over 100 people. Several FX coordinators work through our facility. They run shows like Star Trek, The Umbrella Academy, American Gods. I'm currently supervising a movie for del Toro called Nightmare Alley.

Riverdale has seen unprecedented construction in the last decade, and it will only continue in the next decade, with the development of the southern part below Eastern Avenue, and at the Lever plant. The city and the province have allowed unprecedented growth, with very little thought to transportation. The province and the city are playing catch-up, and they're losing. As the developers force small businesses and lower-wage workers out of Riverdale, they also limit the number of places people can work in well-paying jobs. Barista is not a career.

With the changes to the previous transportation plan, the Ontario Line has been placed above ground. There have been no firm answers about how this will affect the neighbourhood. There have been public meetings, but with no concrete proposals as to how these tracks fit into the corridor from Eastern to Gerrard. Exactly how do you have a meeting when you don't understand or know what the actual plans are?

As a brakeman, as somebody who rode those rails, I know there is not enough room for four tracks, which is what's required for that corridor. There are currently three. There are four tracks up to and behind our building. One of them is simply a siding. But from there through to Gerrard, there's not enough room. So it's pretty obvious that expropriations will be in the wind. Being handed market value for our property is not useful; it's not enough. I'm 65 years old. Am I going to start over? And where am I going to start over? Even with a sizable profit, space in the neighbourhood is (a) not available and (b) very expensive if it is.

So we've been forced into a corner by a bully. We're left with no idea of how to move our company into the next decade. We have no intention and have never had an intention of selling our building, and we've already positioned the company to be taken over by the employees and run with their complete control in the future. Meanwhile, you seek to pass a law that allows demolishing 40 years of endeavour.

We are operating in a vacuum. Information of how this line is to be accomplished is well hidden, and I fear will arrive as a fait accompli. You're trying to pass a law to accomplish that. So I just need to see proper, concrete plans of exactly how this line goes from Lever Brothers to Gerrard Street. That's pretty much all I have to say.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. I will now give the floor to the official opposition for seven minutes of questions, beginning with MPP Tabuns. Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. McMurray, thank you for appearing today. I appreciate the context that you provided to the committee about the decisions we're dealing with in the bill that's before us.

You focused your remarks on the Ontario Line and how it will be built and what information is available and what isn't. I'm curious—I don't know if you're familiar with the element in the bill that removes the protection of citizens against expropriation by eliminating hearings of necessity. Are you familiar with this? And do you have

confidence that the minister will actually exercise discretion in a way that will protect the property owners along this line?

Mr. Laird McMurray: I have no confidence whatsoever that I'd be protected in any way.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That's what many people have said to us today, and I think it's not an unreasonable position.

I think my colleague Ms. Bell would like to ask a question at this point.

Thank you, Mr. McMurray.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Go ahead, Ms. Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Mr. McMurray, for coming in and speaking to the committee today. What do your employees think about the future of their place of work? Do they talk to you about that? What do they say?

Mr. Laird McMurray: I have a fantastic crew of mostly young people at this point, but I do have people who have worked for me for over 30 years. They will do fine. They will find employment in the film industry, is my feeling. That being said, we have a fantastic, cohesive group, and we do very, very good work and have a fantastic client list as well.

To suggest that I may get millions of dollars for my property to allow this line to go through still means that I have to go somewhere, and where is that? So millions of dollars don't really matter. The last time we moved, I stopped counting at a quarter of a million. So what is a quarter of a million 15 years later? Even if our property sells for ten times what we paid for it, we're still going to be in a bad place. And at 65 years old, I'm not starting again. That's why we have taken time to talk to the people who work for us to figure out who can take over and move the company into the future. My wife and I run the company, and it's been our intention, in fact, to sell it. We're essentially trying to do an equity buyout, where the money the company makes pays us, and they end up with it. That's what the plan has been.

1710

With this rail line, with no concrete plans or ideas or even artist concepts of how a train goes through that corridor—personally, all I need to do is go to Google Earth and to remember riding in engines on those rails to know there is not enough room for four tracks. Tracks move in straight lines and curves, and they don't go around objects very well. If you want to have a look at Google Earth, the obvious place to put the fourth track is on the east side of the embankment. In fact, there are four tracks up to where our building is. So if you Google 46 McGee Street on Google Earth, you can have a look. I think it's pretty obvious where the track needs to go. I don't think they're going to like it when they want to tear down Jimmie Simpson either.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for explaining that. Are there any changes to this bill that you would recommend we attempt to introduce? MPP Tabuns and myself are looking at writing amendments in the next few days to work to improve this bill. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for us?

Mr. Laird McMurray: It's a bully bill. It's like, "How do we get this done without really giving anybody much information?" That's exactly what it is. All it does is allow—it's like, "We don't want to pay any higher wages, so we'll pass a law that it's 1%." It's ridiculous. It's a bill that says, "We can do whatever we want." What changes do you make to that?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Well, we have a few that we are considering. One is—

Mr. Laird McMurray: Then have at it.

Ms. Jessica Bell: In my experience, I worked fairly extensively on the Union Pearson Express issue with Metrolinx, and I was shocked to just deal with them and see and experience the lack of information they would give local residents around what their plans were for the Union Pearson Express—how much it would cost to ride the line, whether it was going to be diesel or electrified. Even weeks before the train was meant to open, the city of Toronto and the public did not know how much it would cost to ride the train.

What concerns me with this plan is that we still know very little about what this project could look like, and it means that people like yourself are resorting to Google maps to try to work out where this line could go and how they could be impacted. I think we could do a better job when it comes to building transit than that.

Mr. Laird McMurray: Well, I know you can't manufacture space; you have to buy it and build it. Like I say, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out there is not enough room up there.

But the other problem is, they're absolutely, completely opaque about exactly how they intend—and what type of equipment they're going to use through that corridor. I've heard talks of elevated railroads. That means that the bottom of the train is 70 feet off the ground. Unless they've got a rubber train, the amount of noise that that will introduce to the residents of that section of track is phenomenal. I've worked around railroad equipment. I know what it does. It's noisy.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for your time. Thank you for sharing your concerns today.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you. We will now move on to Mr. Blais, the independent Liberal member, for six minutes of questions. Go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you, Mr. McMurray, for your presentation this afternoon. One of the things that I didn't quite understand that you were mentioning is how receiving market value as part of an expropriation would not be sufficient to then move on and buy something else within the market. I'm wondering if you could elaborate on that a little bit. You had mentioned you stopped counting at \$250,000 the last time you moved, as an example.

Mr. Laird McMurray: The \$250,000 was just the cost of moving. The reality of market value is that I will not be able to find a building in this neighbourhood comparable to what I currently have, because they don't exist. That's the problem. So it forces the company to look elsewhere: Etobicoke, Scarborough, near the airport, as I suggested.

With the way the market has gone in South Riverdale, it's slowly but surely driving high-paying jobs out of the neighbourhood. We saw a lot of this kind of problem when they tried to build a Walmart at 629 Eastern, and part of the SmartCentres case was that they were going to provide a lot of employment to people in South Riverdale. Well, if you're making \$14 an hour as a greeter, is that as good as \$40 an hour as a carpenter on a film? No. So finally, they figured it out and we've kept that area as studios.

We have an incredible industry in South Riverdale in the film industry, and it needs support. If you're going to move a company because you need to put transit, which I agree needs to be done, that's fine. But you're going to have to figure out how to move them into infrastructure that's been prepared to accept them. And a lot more study has to be done on that neighbourhood in terms of how they can provide infrastructure to create and to foster the film industry in Toronto, which has become an incredibly big driver.

So it's a bigger picture than just one track. And this private-public partnership stuff—all I need to do is think 407; it's insane, and we know we're going to get screwed.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. McMurray. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. Now I give the floor to the government, beginning with Ms. Hogarth.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Mr. McMurray, for being here today. The film industry is such an important industry. I'm from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, so we have about seven movie studios here. I actually sit on the committee under Minister MacLeod to help get the film industry back working again. I know that your industry has been hit extremely hard during COVID-19, and it's tens of thousands of jobs just in my riding alone. It's been tough times for that industry, so I thank you for what you're doing and that you were able to contribute to the consultations we've had.

I know the final document was just submitted to the minister and brought to the finance committee, so thank you for any input that you brought forward, because as I said, those are really important jobs. As you mentioned, it's \$2 billion for our economy, and we need to keep those jobs of all types moving.

I just want to clarify a couple of points that you made. This bill is about four transit lines and moving them forward using the lessons that were learned from the Eglinton Crosstown. If you know the Eglinton Crosstown, it was about three years over time and that really caused a lot of hardship for people who lived in the area and was extremely hard for businesses, and many businesses had to shut down.

What our government wants to do is, we want to have less burden on the residents, less burden on those businesses. But right now the plan is not there just yet. We're not there. We have put out an RFQ, but the project has not been tendered yet, so details about exactly what it will look like are yet to be determined. So there's still some work to do on that.

Now when it comes to consultations, we really want to have a rigorous consultations process. I'm not sure if you've signed up, but Metrolinx actually has a website that you can join. I think it's a link—I'll find it somewhere on one of these sheets of paper—where you can sign up to get information. What we've heard is that a lot of people have not received the information they need of what's going on in their community, which is really important. We've heard that a lot today. So that's something that we need to discuss, and how we get that information out to our residents, because it is important to know what's going on in your neighbourhood.

Our government wants to make sure that we are working with you to make sure that we get transit delivered on time and on budget. Those are the key pieces that are part of this legislation. It's looking at shortening the time frame by coordinating utility relocations and coordinating construction projects and coordinating permits with the city. As a moviemaker, you know what it's like to get permits from the city. Sometimes it's not all that easy. It takes time.

1720

A questions for you: If the bill could be amended so that it could achieve its purpose of building transit faster, how can we do that and address your concerns?

Mr. Laird McMurray: Sorry, I'm not exactly sure. Based on the reading I've done and based on all the information I've read online that Metrolinx has to offer, expropriation is expropriation. It's like, "Here's your fair market value. Go away"—if somebody walked in and said, "For the betterment of mankind and Toronto, we're going to expropriate your property to build transit. And in the meantime, we've talked to these private enterprises and all these places, and you can go here; you can go there."

Certainly, there are other companies that are attempting to set up infrastructure facilities in South Riverdale for the film industry, because the places we traditionally went to have disappeared through construction, through the Don River rerouting, for a lot of reasons. There are private enterprises trying to start to create this kind of space. It's not simply about studios. Where do you build the sets? Where do you sew the wardrobe? Where do you store the props? There's a tremendous amount of infrastructure and a tremendous amount of money spent to do that. But every time we move through South Riverdale and put up another condo, and knock down a warehouse and knock down my warehouse, if you will, we send those jobs somewhere else.

Currently, I'm spending over \$40,000 a year storing containers in Scarborough, because I can't find anywhere in South Riverdale to store them. I used to store them at the port, but that's gone now. So it's complicated.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It's tough for businesses, especially in your business, when you have large storage units that you need.

I just want to make sure that you are aware that this bill doesn't change the outcomes. We are still going to build transit, because we need transit. This is something that the

city of Toronto has been talking about for years—and have had so many different proposals on the shelf. Finally, historically, we have a solution, and we are working with the city. The local councillor was on board when she voted for this.

We want to make sure that we build transit, but what this bill does is that it streamlines the process and it removes the common areas of delay from major transit projects—the things I've mentioned. It just removes those duplications of efforts such as the utility relocations. That just takes time. It causes delay, and those delays cause hardship for everyone in the community.

As I said, if you walk down Eglinton Avenue East, those people aren't happy. They will be one day when they get that transit, but they've been living with that since 2011. I certainly don't want to see that for your beautiful community. I've been to your community; it is wonderful.

People need to get around the city, and we just really want to make sure transit happens and we get it done quickly, fast and efficiently. But also, we want you to be part of the consultations. We want the community to be part of the consultations. That's what we believe in.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. Mr. McMurray, I'm afraid that's all the time we have today. Thank you for spending this past half-hour with us.

MR. GREG GRAY

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): This brings us to our last presenter of the day—last but certainly not least—Mr. Greg Gray. Hello. Good afternoon. Welcome.

Mr. Greg Gray: Hi.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): You will have 10 minutes for your presentation, and you may begin by stating your name for the record.

Mr. Greg Gray: Okay. My name is Greg Gray. I live at 104 De Grassi. Can everyone hear me?

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you. You may begin.

Mr. Greg Gray: Okay, you can hear me. Cool. So I'm last up of the day. The good news is, I think I'm at about five minutes, so maybe everyone can get out and enjoy this weather.

Hi. Thanks for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Greg Gray. I actually live on De Grassi Street. I'm two streets over from the Lakeshore East GO train tracks, the corridor. We've been here since 2001; we've been here for a while. It has been great to watch the neighbourhood grow. We're also, by my estimation, about 300 metres, give or take, from where the proposed Ontario Line Leslieville station is going to be, assuming it ends up being at or adjacent to the corner of Queen and De Grassi.

I just want to start by saying that I'm a transit user. I use transit, and when I can't, I do the bike share. I've been doing it for a long time, and I'm a fan. I think it should go without saying that I understand that the city desperately needs transit. We need it now, and we need it for the future. I also support the Ontario Line; I'm not here to say

I don't. I think it's a transit solution that's going to happen now, and I think it's a transit solution that's going to be around for the generations that are coming.

But I'm not in support of Bill 171 in its current form, and I'll tell you why: It's because the bill doesn't provide a voice for the communities it's about to change.

What I'm really going to talk about today is my little piece of the four communities that it's about to touch. I'd like to think this consideration could spread across those four, but I'm going to stick to where I live for now.

Today, what I'm asking you to consider is an amendment to Bill 171 that would call for the establishment of a working group made up of Metrolinx, business owners and residents of the two-kilometre stretch of the Ontario Line between Eastern and Gerrard. Within that working group, I'd also ask for a point person or point people the community can reach out to as needed.

Now, I understand there's a Lakeshore East community advisory committee. I know it exists; I've been to their meetings. I don't sit on the CAC. I know some of the people on it; they're fantastic people. The Lakeshore East Community Advisory Committee was set up for GO RER quite some time ago, and they also cover a much wider mandate than this two-kilometre stretch where the above ground is slated to go.

I'll tell you why I think this is important: It's because the Ontario Line represents a very different challenge for us, especially those of us along this corridor. That's why we need a more focused working group that's going to allow us to have a direct line to Metrolinx to keep them accountable. I'm going to be very blunt with the committee: We do need to hold Metrolinx accountable, because so far they haven't been communicating or co-operating with the community very well at all. I'm going to give you some examples now. Some are big, and some are small.

In October of last year, many of us spoke to the city of Toronto executive committee about item 9.1, which was the Toronto-Ontario Transit Update. It was more than a packed room. Perhaps some of you saw it, or some of you were there. They actually had to open overflow rooms with monitors, there were so many people who were interested in the conversation. A big message—certainly the one that I wanted to help champion in the room—was burying the line. What made up most of my presentation was the fact that at the time, both the Metrolinx initial business case and the city of Toronto report on the Metrolinx initial business case acknowledged that an underground solution was the preferred method for the two-kilometre stretch between Eastern and Gerrard. I found it very confusing and more than a little troublesome that we were being served up an above ground solution and that was what was being sold to us.

Anyway, we had the meeting, and we were delighted to hear later from our councillor, Paula Fletcher, as she really helped rally the community. We were delighted to hear that the executive council had actually amended 9.1 to include several recommendations, including a request that Metrolinx mitigate impacts of the line and “consider options for constructing further portions of the Ontario

Line underground, where local impacts cannot be reasonably managed.” Then later, we were let down to hear that Metrolinx apparently had no plans to even study the option. It was already set in stone.

We could also talk about safety and bridges. The ones that the Ontario Line is going to cross—I imagine some of you may have been down to this neighbourhood; maybe not. The bridges the Ontario Line is going to cross are ancient. They're very, very old. I don't know the year, but they're old. Councillor Fletcher once again moved motions at city hall to ask Metrolinx to study the expansion of neighbourhood bridges to safely service the new tracks that will be going in. Apparently, that's not going to be acted on either, as it means extensive safety protocols and extensive barriers.

I was lucky enough to catch the tail end of the last conversation, and a member of the committee had mentioned consultation with Metrolinx. I want to touch on that because, in terms of community consultation, I think a great example would be the actual one they had—I believe it was February or March, when they had their sort of town halls. I attended the one up the street at the church, and it was really a presentation; it was not a consultation. It was a bit of a comedic kind of vibe. I received contradictory information within minutes of arriving, two completely different facts from two different Metrolinx representatives.

1730

There was a less-than-truthful poster that claimed a train every 90 seconds. The reality, as we understand it, is one every 45. That was a printed poster. There was no presentation. There was no keynote speaker. There was nothing we hadn't really seen in the initial business case, and I took it as a condescending road show.

The last thing I wanted to talk about is a small thing, and I actually think it says a lot. I'm going to talk about pink spray paint for a second. A few weeks ago, I left my house to find pink spray paint on the sidewalks up the entire length and along both sides of my street—it was also on adjacent streets—leading from the road to where one would expect utilities to be buried towards the homes. In some places, the paint went over garden plants, and we had not received any notice. As a matter of fact, there was a city of Toronto worker who had his truck parked about a week after we noticed the paint, and I asked him about it and he had no idea what was going on either.

Of course, it was a little while later that we found out it was Ontario Line early works. They were marking utilities as part of the early works. By the way, we've since gotten distributed through the neighbourhood group a letter from Metrolinx and an explanation and a promise to send out a community representative—and I think clear up the paint on the plants. Honestly, no one cares about the paint. I'm not here to talk to you about being angry about paint. As a matter of fact, it's already faded. Deciding to mark utilities as part of your early works, to me, anyway, does not call for a community consultation or a meeting, but an email letting people know what's going on takes nothing to send. Notices are simple to post on social media, and being a

good neighbour is easy, now more than ever. That's exactly why it's so critical that this committee consider an amendment to Bill 171 that calls for the establishment of a working group made up of Metrolinx, business owners and residents of the two-kilometre stretch of the Ontario Line between Eastern and Gerrard.

Listen, I know I've spent the last few minutes complaining about Metrolinx. Let me be clear: I don't think they're a group of people sitting in a boardroom trying to find ways to annoy communities; I genuinely don't. I'm sure they're good people trying to do a good job, just like everyone else. But at the end of the day, the job they've been tasked with is enormous and complex, and without a formalized way for us to communicate with Metrolinx on an ongoing basis, we're going to continue to be ignored. My community is going to be living right in the middle of one of the biggest transit projects Metrolinx has ever undertaken. The least they can do is be good neighbours.

I thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much. We will begin our questions with Mr. Blais, independent Liberal member, for six minutes.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Gray, for your presentation this afternoon.

I agree: I think the establishment of a stakeholder working group with community and business leaders and Metrolinx is in fact a very good idea. Why do you think it should be limited to the two-kilometre stretch? What's the rationale for that?

Mr. Greg Gray: I don't. I think it should be part of every one of the four projects that this bill will encompass. I should have clarified that in my talk. I am speaking for my neighbourhood, I feel at this point, my two-kilometre stretch. I really can't speak to the nuances of the specific situations with Scarborough or Eglinton because I don't live there.

But, listen, let's spread it out. Let everyone have one. I think it's important that everyone have a voice.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that clarification. Then, just in terms of what kinds of information, project details, scheduling notifications etc.—to what extent do you think the consultative group would work on? Is it simply a matter of the telephone tree for the email you were just describing that you didn't receive? How complex and detailed do you think such a group should get?

Mr. Greg Gray: If there was an amendment made to the bill, what I would love to do, in very short order—I would love to know what best practices are. I can tell you what I would like, but I don't know what's going to work best for the community, and I'm sure there are best practices.

What I would like, especially as we go into the actual building phase, are frequent updates. I would like an opportunity to speak with Metrolinx. I would like, where available, an opportunity to participate in some of the things like noise mitigation. I think we should have a voice in that if it's going to affect the community.

I want to be clear. I understand the name of the act is building transit faster, and I'm not looking to build transit slower. I'm looking to build transit fairly and right for both Metrolinx and the community. So I'd look for best practices. I'm sorry for veering off topic.

Mr. Stephen Blais: No, best practices are great. In fact, in a recent procurement that was finished in Ottawa, there are some 25 pages describing exactly the process that you're discussing, and it's built into the project agreement as part of the contract. In fairness, it's likely something that will happen here, as well.

In terms of construction-related issues, inevitably during construction things will happen. We've heard from other presenters that they would like a single point of contact at Metrolinx or, presumably, the agency or the consortium of builders that's responsible for construction at the end of the day. I presume that is something you would like to see.

Mr. Greg Gray: Absolutely. We'd love to have somebody to speak to. We have not, as yet, been communicated—it would be everything to me. If a dump truck dings someone's truck or car, who do we call? We need to know all of these things as we go into the process.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Would you agree that different events—something as small as a dinged car versus something as major as massive construction that's going to shut down XYZ—the response protocol, the information to the community, the notification required in some periods, that that would be different based on the level of incident or piece of construction that is about to happen?

Mr. Greg Gray: Yes, I think that's fair to say.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that. Thank you very much for your presentation this afternoon.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): We will now move to the government for seven minutes of questions, beginning with MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: Thank you very much for your presentation. We really enjoyed hearing your point of view, which is very in line with our thinking and what we are trying to do as a government.

Being a project of that magnitude, at this early stage of time, I do not think that Metrolinx have the final project plans to be able to send letters about exactly how it will look after they do their testing and design and everything else—the route, the choice and all the details. Then, they can issue some official kind of statement talking about this.

The problem I see, from an execution point of view on the project, is that we are still in the early stages. We don't know how it's going to look, as things change—changes across the route—until we get to the final approved design and execution plan and dates and everything. In the interim, I think this is a very good point to be taken: that communication has to be continuously going with Metrolinx, and the government. We are doing our best to make sure that the communication is going to the end users, to the neighbourhoods of the area.

It's still in the early stages, and I think all those details should not be part of the bill. The bill is solely about how

we are going to start the project, how we get the positioning of the project, how we form the relations between Metrolinx, the government and the neighbourhood. When the engineering comes into place and the project is put in place, with timetables and schedules, things can be discussed at that stage of time.

I am really glad that you see the need for transit and that transit will open Toronto for the mobility of users, will take some cars off the street, will off-load some of the areas. Only just by moving the new line will take about 13% of the load off Union Station, which is overly crowded and a single point of failure when something happens.

1740

I think this is a great opportunity for Toronto, a great opportunity for the people who live in Toronto, the neighbourhood, in Toronto, and a great opportunity for transit as decades have gone without any touch on this. I think this is, if you agree with me, a good initiative from the government, taking over big projects like that.

I hear you about the communication and the transparency and information dismantling. What else, other than communication, do you think could be added to the project or the bill? As I mentioned, some of the asks are not really—should be in the bill itself, but what else can we conduct as a government to Metrolinx to make things more smooth and acceptable to the neighbourhood?

Mr. Greg Gray: Assuming it's far too late to revisit an underground transit solution—because I won't derail, but I believe in our heart of hearts we all understand that is the most appropriate solution for this. Again, to stay on topic, I think my big push today is accountability from Metrolinx. If you don't mind, sir, I would challenge that. I think now is the time to write in communications. I do know it's early works and I do know we have not had plans yet, but to go back to something as trivial and silly as pink spray paint, which at the end of the day is meaningless to the neighbourhood and meaningless to the community—it really is. If you want to judge a person on how they're going to handle the big things, you look at the small things. To not get any kind of heads-up, to not get a courtesy email or a pamphlet stuffed in the mailbox—to me it starts now. To me it starts with the small things. And then when the big things happen, do you know what? If all goes well, there's more trust and there's better communication and there's not a stone wall. That would be my two cents on that.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I totally agree with you on this point. Point taken, absolutely, yes. And I also agree with the building the trust part as well, that given it's two-way communication, a two-way road.

The only issue I have, as I mentioned, is if they start sending something with advisories of some sort, and then later in the stages they have to change it, then the people come and say, "No. You told us this. Now it's that." That would be the fear from any contractor.

I'm not talking about Metrolinx. I'm not here to defend Metrolinx, honestly. I'm just here to clarify and understand the concerns and try to, as much as we can,

accommodate that as a government. It's our role and our duty to do that. But I'm not here to defend them. They can defend themselves. As I mentioned, there is a fear always to hard code something and then have to go back and change it, then it becomes a first line in the media kind of thing, you know.

Mr. Greg Gray: Yes, I understand that. I appreciate that point of view, absolutely. I don't think what we're asking for is a situation where we—if the above ground solution goes ahead, I think we would want to be given, like everybody else, "Here's what the plan is going to be." I think I'm talking more about when we actually get shovels into the ground and it starts happening. I'm sure there will be false starts, and I don't necessarily—look, we're not looking to be neighbours who are peering over the shoulders of a contractor and pointing out what we think they're doing wrong. Nobody wants that either.

And by the way, I'm not here to vilify Metrolinx. I don't see them as a Death Star off in the distance waiting to screw my life over in the least. I tangentially know somebody who works at Metrolinx and they're a fantastic person. But I do think we need to find that balance, and I think certainly your opinion and my opinion could find a very easy meeting place, because I don't think they're that far off. Again, we don't need to see the array of plans, as much as we would like to. I think what we need to do is move together in a responsible way that respects the community.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you very much, Mr. Gray. We are now moving on to seven minutes of questions by the official opposition. MPP Tabuns, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Chair. You're a very patient Chair. And Mr. Gray, I really appreciate you hanging in there and making this presentation this late in the day.

I'm going to make a brief statement and then I have some questions. I've been working with Metrolinx now for a number of years on the regional express rail consultations and now the Ontario Line. Frankly, the individuals that I've dealt with for the most part I have a lot of respect for. They are [*inaudible*] as an organization as a whole, I have to agree with you that in general, Metrolinx is not a good neighbour. I have found, in dealing with the regional express rail, what a number of my other constituents found, and that's that there was a big gap between what was promised and what was actually delivered. That undermined credibility for Metrolinx, which is really problematic when you've got a project like this, where you're going to be touching on the lives of literally thousands of people. I was certainly upset when I realized that the condition related to the city of Toronto's support for the Ontario Line, and that condition—being Metrolinx looking at the alternatives to an above ground section between Eastern and Gerrard—was something that they had not touched at all, in any way, shape or form.

All of that said—and it's consistent with what you've said in your testimony—what is it going to take for Metrolinx to re-establish credibility with this community?

That's my first question. The second question is: How, in setting up this construction working group, do you think things should be set up so that we actually get results coming out of it, rather than just having a social once a week or once a month where we complain and they listen and then things go on?

Mr. Greg Gray: Those are great questions. I think what it would take for Metrolinx to start to build trust in this community, it would take them—I'll come back to it one more time and then I'll leave it: It's the pink spray paint. They have to tell us when they are doing things like that. Because again, it is a trivial, little thing today that makes people go, "Why is there spray paint all over my street?" It's not the end of the world. I would never call you, Peter, and say, "There's spray paint on my street." It is what it is. But to not have anyone say, "Hey, man, we're going to spray-paint your street, and it's going to make things ugly for a few weeks until it washes away. But just so you know there's a reason"—to me, it's the little things that build the big things, right? You start putting pennies in the jar.

Metrolinx needs to start understanding—Metrolinx doesn't need to do anything. If Metrolinx would like to gain the trust of this neighbourhood and move forward in a more positive, inclusive way, I think the best path to do that is to start working as partners with the community and keep us abreast of what they're doing—at least letting us peek inside the tent as we move forward.

To your point, Peter, how to set up a group that would actually be effective, let's have, for example—when whoever this group is does have a meeting with Metrolinx, we could insist on actionable items coming out of it. We could insist on what was discussed, what we are doing, moving forward. Maybe that's a format—and I'm doing a little blue-sky here, but maybe that is a format by which everyone can come out saying, "We have agreed on these two things that we're going to start seeing by the next meeting; or "Here's what happened in our neighbourhood that made us upset this week. We want to find out why and who, and how it's not going to happen again"; or "You know what you guys did great, Metrolinx, and we want to say thanks for? We love the way you gave us three weeks' notice before you told that individual there was a generator going in their backyard"—I don't know. You know what I mean?

Ultimately, the relationship, if it's going to happen and if it's going to be strong, can't turn into essentially what I just did in my testimony. It shouldn't turn into a "Let's all go bitch at Metrolinx." It should be: "We're here to have a conversation. We're here to talk as adults. We're here to either solve problems or congratulate each other or, yes, air grievances." But I think it's really in the tone and the dialogue and accountability. How is that established? Again, are there best practices? I don't know.

For me, in business, coming out of things with items that people will own in a meeting tends to work wonders. Because we're going to talk again in three weeks and we'll ask how you did, because you said you would own it.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yep—a pretty good answer.

You started off by saying that you didn't support this bill, Bill 171. You suggested one amendment, which I think is a very good amendment: setting up working groups in construction areas so that problems get resolved. We've just discussed that. Are there other substantial parts of this bill that you believe make it a bill that shouldn't be supported?

Mr. Greg Gray: The other big thing for me was the lack of the hearing of necessity thing with the expropriations. I'm sure you've heard a lot of that over the past few days and you'll hear more of it tomorrow. I've been doing a lot of Google reading on it. My understanding is that that hearing is not necessarily the be-all and end-all. Those hearings are problematic to begin with. It's not going to necessarily solve problems. But what it does do, again, is it gives homeowners something to be able to fall back on if they disagree with what Metrolinx is doing as they head into the land assembly part of the deal. I understand why it's been taken away; I kind of get it. But at the same time, I wish that were still there so homeowners who felt like they were jeopardized had some sort of recourse. That would be my other big one.

Based on what we had heard through—I would love to see more due diligence done in terms of safety, certainly. My understanding is, with the bridges, I would love to see—I know we're trying to build it quickly; let's also build it safely. I don't know the whole story there. My understanding is, the bridges are a little problematic. My understanding is as well that the TTC itself has said they would probably not run light rail trains beside big GO trains. That might be a bad idea, but we're forging ahead.

I don't work at Metrolinx—I'm not an engineer. Smart people do, but if there's a problem, I would really want that not to become a safety issue for the community.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think that that safety issue of running relatively light subway cars beside heavy rail is a huge one. It hasn't been addressed by Metrolinx, and I think they do need to address it. I think the safety issues are going to be substantial.

It's interesting; the geography of your neighbourhood was shaped by a tragedy in 1926 when a streetcar returning from the Ex was hit by a train at De Grassi and Queen, and that's why we have an elevated—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks, Greg.

The Chair (Ms. Natalia Kusendova): Thank you, Mr. Gray. This brings us to the end of the agenda for today. As a reminder, the deadline to send in a written submission will be 6 p.m. on June 10.

I would like to remind you that we are meeting tomorrow at 9 a.m. in committee room 1. We will be hosting a pre-committee meeting at 8:45.

Thank you to all of the staff today for your support and to all of the members for bearing with all the technical difficulties we've had today. I think it was rather smooth. Thank you so much. This committee now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The committee adjourned at 1752.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Chair / Présidente

Ms. Natalia Kusendova (Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre PC)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Aris Babikian (Scarborough–Agincourt PC)

Mr. Aris Babikian (Scarborough–Agincourt PC)

Mr. Jeff Burch (Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre ND)

Ms. Amy Fee (Kitchener South–Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud–Hespeler PC)

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Supérieur-Nord L)

Mr. Joel Harden (Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre ND)

Mr. Mike Harris (Kitchener–Conestoga PC)

Ms. Christine Hogarth (Etobicoke–Lakeshore PC)

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios (Cambridge PC)

Mr. Terence Kernaghan (London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord ND)

Ms. Natalia Kusendova (Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre PC)

Mrs. Robin Martin (Eglinton–Lawrence PC)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Ms. Jessica Bell (University–Rosedale ND)

Mr. Stephen Blais (Orléans L)

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed (Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville PC)

Mr. Sheref Sabawy (Mississauga–Erin Mills PC)

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth ND)

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam (Scarborough–Rouge Park PC)

Clerk pro tem / Greffier par interim

Mr. Eric Rennie

Staff / Personnel

Ms. Erica Simmons, research officer,
Research Services

Mr. Michael Vidoni, research officer,
Research Services