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Mercredi
17 juin 2020

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 June 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 juin 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING TRANSIT FASTER ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020
SUR LA CONSTRUCTION PLUS RAPIDE
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Ms. Mulroney moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I look to the Minister of Transportation to lead it off.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I will be splitting my time with my colleague the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Monsieur le Président, c'est un honneur d'être ici aujourd'hui pour parler de notre projet de loi, la Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun, et de la manière dont elle permettra aux gens de se déplacer dans la région du grand Toronto.

It's a pleasure to be here today to talk about our proposed legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act, and how it will get people moving in the greater Toronto area.

Since announcing the four priority transit projects in the spring of 2019, our government has taken significant action to advance these projects, and this legislation is the latest in those series of actions.

One thing that we hear repeatedly is that a decade of political posturing and failed plans have increased gridlock and left our transit systems grossly underfunded and bursting at the seams, using last century's technologies. Simply put, the level of investment in transportation infrastructure has not kept up with demand.

The last government abdicated its responsibility on this front. It was either unwilling or unable to build the right mix of transportation infrastructure that sustains the needs of the province today or in the future. That is why our government has made transit a priority. Our plan will make it easier for people to get around no matter where they live, connecting communities to jobs and stimulating economic growth.

In moving forward with these projects, we have to acknowledge the impact that COVID-19 has had on our day-to-day lives. Its effects are even felt in how we conduct ourselves in this chamber, and it has affected how and when people use public transit. I'm so proud to see so many Ontarians stepping up and doing their part to stop the spread, and it's working. That's why we are able to move responsibly and to begin reopening the economy.

As we begin to recover and reopen, millions of people will continue to rely on public transit to get to work or to go to school, and despite the challenges that we face, it's crucial to recognize that this should not change our long-term transit planning. Ontario will persevere and people will confidently return to public transit. When they do, the system must be ready to accommodate them in growing numbers.

Since becoming Minister of Transportation, I have heard from many people about the challenges they face getting to and from work. People are frustrated because they are stuck sitting in traffic for hours instead of enjoying time with their loved ones. Nowhere in our province is this wasted time more apparent than in the GTA, where the average commute to and from work is 48 minutes both ways, and for many people it's even longer.

According to the C.D. Howe Institute, the GTA loses \$11 billion in productivity each year as a result of gridlock, and the Toronto Region Board of Trade estimates that gridlock adds \$400 million to the cost of goods in this region. Those are astonishing figures.

It's time to bring an end to the culture of delay and to get shovels in the ground to build a better future for the GTA.

Around the world, we've seen that access to transit improves communities and quality of life, yet if you look at a map of Toronto's subway network, it hasn't evolved much since the 1990s, which, if you can believe, is now three decades ago. We cannot sustain the needs of riders today, let alone prepare for the needs of our growing and prosperous world-class city.

Over the past 50 years in Toronto, city council after city council has tried to increase the capacity of the subway system through various projects and plans, but they never seem to get built. The Eglinton Crosstown LRT is now expected to be complete in 2022, over three years behind schedule. History has shown that when it comes to building transit in Toronto, it just takes way too long to build.

This pace is unacceptable, and it clearly demonstrates the need for a different approach. If Toronto is truly to be a world-class city, then we must build a world-class transit network.

The next decade will be transformational. I genuinely believe that we are at a critical point in Ontario's transportation history, especially here in the GTA. It's more important than ever that we get it right, and that's why our government is working differently to build better transit faster through a different and a smarter approach.

Smart transportation planning is about more than just getting people from A to B; it's about connecting economic opportunities to livable communities in ways that improve the overall quality of life. If we are going to achieve this, we need to clear the roadblocks and commit to doing things differently.

That's why I am proud to present our government's plan to expedite the construction of our four priority transit projects, including our signature transit project, the Ontario Line. The Building Faster Transit Act, if passed, will eliminate the barriers that have held up projects in the past. The new tools outlined in this legislation will help us deliver the transit network that Ontarians deserve as quickly as possible.

If history has taught us anything, it's that it's not just enough to plan new transit lines. We need to develop new strategies that directly address the challenges and delays that past projects have faced. Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what our proposed legislation does.

This legislation, and complementary regulatory changes, target six key challenges that have held up major transit plans in the past.

The first challenge relates to a lack of knowledge of construction activities from neighbouring sites that interfere with the development of subway tunnels and stations, creating safety concerns and delays.

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The second is the need for better coordination in obtaining municipal permits for provincial transit projects.

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

The fourth relates to land assembly, where the hearing-of-necessity process adds many additional months to project timelines and delivers a non-binding decision, with land expropriation often still necessary.

The fifth challenge relates to utility relocation. In the past, the lack of coordination between transit projects and utilities has caused significant delays, leading to substantial increases in costs.

Finally, our colleagues at the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks are also working on regulatory adjustments to the current environmental assessment process that will offer the flexibility needed to align with the timelines associated with our priority transit projects.

These six key challenges have been the source of significant delays in past transit projects and are precisely the types of setbacks that we can no longer afford. For each of these challenges identified, we've put forward solutions that will speed up the process, while still treating people fairly.

Ce projet de loi et les changements réglementaires complémentaires ciblent six défis clés qui ont retardé les grands projets dans le passé.

Le premier défi est lié au manque de connaissance des activités de construction des sites voisins qui interfèrent avec la construction des tunnels et des stations de métro, créant des problèmes de sécurité et des retards.

Le second est la nécessité d'une meilleure coordination pour l'obtention des permis municipaux pour les projets de transports en commun provinciaux.

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

Le quatrième concerne le remembrement des terrains, où le processus d'audiences de nécessité peut ajouter du temps additionnel aux échéanciers des projets et aboutit à une décision non contraignante, l'expropriation des terrains étant souvent encore nécessaire.

Le cinquième défi concerne la relocalisation des services publics. Dans le passé, le manque de coordination entre les projets de transports en commun et les services publics a entraîné des retards importants, ce qui a entraîné une augmentation substantielle des coûts.

Enfin, nos collègues au ministère de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs travaillent également sur des ajustements réglementaires du système actuel d'évaluations environnementales qui offriront la souplesse nécessaire pour s'aligner sur les délais associés à nos projets prioritaires de transports en commun.

Ces six défis clés ont été à l'origine de retards importants dans les projets de transports en commun passés et sont précisément le type de revers que nous ne pouvons plus nous permettre.

Pour chacun des défis reconnus, nous avons proposé des solutions qui permettront d'accélérer le processus, tout en traitant les gens de manière équitable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to discuss each of these solutions in more detail, beginning with utility relocation. Our proposed legislation introduces processes that will get utilities relocated faster while still treating businesses and consumers fairly. By giving Metrolinx the ability to require enhanced coordination of utility relocations, we will help move projects forward. Ensuring this level of coordination with utility companies has significant impacts on using the public-private partnership model of delivering transit projects and has been an ongoing challenge for Metrolinx.

Providing companies with clear deadlines for relocating their services, such as gas or telecommunications, would compel industries to complete this work quickly while Metrolinx covers these costs. However, if this doesn't happen, they would be required to compensate Metrolinx for losses incurred due to relocating delays.

We are proposing the implementation of a system that quickly escalates and resolves any disputes to prevent things from being drawn out for months and months, and this is similar to how we are already doing things for

highway projects. There is no reason why this cannot be applied successfully to our priority transit projects.

We also need to ensure that any costs incurred by utility companies as a result of their missed deadlines are not passed on to consumers. To do this, we are proposing amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act that would prohibit the Ontario Energy Board from allowing provincially regulated utilities—electricity and natural gas—to pass costs along to consumers. This is how we'll prevent rates from going up as a result of this legislation, and I am very happy to report that many utilities are already working with us. We've signed memoranda of understanding with Hydro One, Toronto Hydro and Enbridge. Our changes will help bring all services to the same standard. Adopting a more efficient relocation process while continuing to treat businesses fairly and ensuring that costs are not passed on to consumers makes sense.

Another element of our plan focuses on land assembly. If we want to build this type of infrastructure quickly and efficiently, we need access to the land to construct stations, to conduct tunnelling and to prepare the sites. Currently, some redundancies leave us obligated to repeatedly demonstrate the need for land related to infrastructure, one property at a time. Under our plan, we'd remove the hearing-of-necessity step for any property related to our four priority transit projects. Once we have sufficiently demonstrated the need for a property, we wouldn't have to go back and unnecessarily do the same thing repeatedly.

As always, we will continue to treat people fairly and to appropriately compensate owners, tenants and others whose properties are required either temporarily or permanently. This will never change. We must balance the rights of residents and businesses along the transit corridor with the urgent need for renewed public transit infrastructure in the GTA.

Our third solution ensures our ability to carry out due diligence work, such as soil testing and tree removal, something that has caused significant delays in the past. The proposed legislation would allow us to enter transit corridor lands to conduct due diligence work and to remove encroachments during the planning and construction phases without the consent of property owners. This doesn't mean that we would show up unannounced in the middle of the night to do soil inspections, and this would not give us the right to enter a dwelling. Our intention is always to work collaboratively towards an amicable agreement with property owners to complete this work.

But what this measure does is that it gives us a backstop that prevents significant delays should we be unable to reach an agreement. Treating people fairly, Mr. Speaker, is our priority, but we cannot allow someone with a personal objection to delay these projects for months.

This brings me to the fourth element of our proposed legislation: requiring owners of adjacent lands to obtain a permit for the development activities along the transit corridor. This will ensure that our priority transit projects are not disrupted due to the surrounding construction and development. It just doesn't make sense for private developments to take precedence over investments in the

transit system that is needed to support them. We are ending this practice and instituting an approach that allows us to review all projects surrounding the transit corridor. This will help to eliminate any safety concerns and construction delays that have historically led to increased costs and prolonged timelines for the delivery of transit infrastructure.

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Our fifth proposal is to give Metrolinx the authority to use or modify municipal assets, like roadways and municipal services. We are committed to working with our municipal partners to achieve our shared goal of the accelerated delivery of these major transit projects.

I want to thank the city of Toronto for providing feedback as part of their written submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. We greatly appreciate the input. In the weeks and months to come, we will address the city's comments through additional engagement, guidance and regulation, if necessary.

Our collaboration-first approach with our municipal partners will allow us to make significant strides to achieve our shared goal of getting transit built faster; however, we need to establish a path forward should our collaborative efforts reach an impasse. It's these types of deadlocks that have brought us where we are today. We need to have the processes established to keep our work on track and on budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about our proposed plan to modernize the current system of environmental assessment. I want to reaffirm that we take very seriously our responsibility to protect Ontario's environment. I am sure that this is something we can all agree on, but the current system of environmental assessment does not offer the flexibility for innovation that the P3 model requires.

As the system stands today, individuals can protract this process even though their concerns have been given a fair hearing. These proposed changes strike a balance between our obligation to safeguard the environment and our commitment to build a world-class transit system for this region.

I want to be clear: We are not removing any environmental protections. These regulatory changes are merely improving the speed and the efficiency of these processes. Together, these regulatory changes, and the rest of our proposed plan, tackle the status quo. It's a status quo of delays. If passed, this legislation will bring in a new era of transit investment and delivery here in the GTA.

At the public hearings last week, we heard valuable feedback from people who live and work in Toronto. We heard from local business associations, transit advocates, residents and more. One thing is clear: People care very deeply about transportation in this city, and it is wonderful to see such passion.

There were quite a few common themes. One that resonated with me is that while people are very much in favour of building transit quickly, many of them also raised the importance of getting it right. We cannot sacrifice sound planning for speed, and I certainly agree with that sentiment. That's why we have focused solely on

eliminating the roadblocks that cause unnecessary delays. We remain committed to due diligence and delivering the right projects for the GTA that are going to make a real, positive impact for people.

Another key theme we heard, especially from those who live and work near these projects, was the importance of community engagement and consultation, as well as concerns about the local impacts of construction. We've definitely heard and understand those concerns, and though it's not directly part of this proposed legislation, we are certainly committed to working closely with Metrolinx to ensure that they are a good neighbour while we are working on these projects in their communities.

That means making sure that we're doing everything that we can to minimize disruptions during construction, and making sure that they are on site to avoid things like unnecessarily blocking people's parking spots or shining lights into their homes. While some local disruption, unfortunately, is unavoidable when you're talking about major infrastructure projects, there are certainly some steps that we can take—and we will—to ensure that Metrolinx reduces these disruptions as much as possible.

We will also continue to work closely with Metrolinx and the city of Toronto to coordinate community engagement opportunities for people to offer their feedback. Community engagement and consultation are a vital part of Metrolinx's planning and design process. We are working with the agency to ensure that community information offices are established and providing on-the-ground support for information and inquiries regarding all planned and ongoing projects.

Un autre aspect que nous avons entendu à répétition était l'importance de l'engagement et de la consultation des communautés, ainsi que les préoccupations concernant les impacts locaux de la construction. Nous avons certainement pris en considération ces préoccupations, et nous sommes engagés à travailler en étroite collaboration avec Metrolinx pour s'assurer qu'ils agissent en bon voisin pendant qu'ils sont dans ces communautés à travailler sur ces projets.

Il faut s'assurer que tout est fait pour minimiser les perturbations pendant la construction. Entre autres, il faut s'assurer que les espaces de stationnement ne soient pas bloqués inutilement ou que la lumière ne soit pas projetée dans les maisons. Si certaines perturbations sont inévitables, nous prendrons les mesures nécessaires pour que Metrolinx les réduise autant que possible.

Nous continuerons également à travailler en étroite collaboration avec Metrolinx et la ville de Toronto pour coordonner les possibilités d'engagement communautaire afin que les gens puissent donner leur avis. L'engagement et la consultation de la communauté sont une partie essentielle du processus de planification et de conception de Metrolinx. Nous travaillons avec Metrolinx pour assurer la mise en place de bureaux d'information communautaires qui permettront aux citoyens dans les zones de projet de s'informer sur tous les projets prévus et en cours.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 outbreak is making this kind of community engagement challenging.

That's why Metrolinx is exploring new ways to engage with local residents in light of the current situation to ensure people know how they can learn more about our priority transit projects and can continue to offer their feedback.

Our government campaigned on a promise to the people of Ontario to do things more efficiently, and we're delivering on our commitment to building the public transit system that best serves the needs of this region. Our plan will get people to and from work faster so that they spend less time sitting in traffic and more time with their families.

We now have preliminary agreements that formalize our partnerships with the city of Toronto and York region, laying the foundation for continued collaboration between our two governments. This is excellent news. We are committed to working closely with the TTC, the city of Toronto and the region of York to get shovels in the ground, to dig the tunnels and to get the trains in service so that we can deliver more transit options, all with accelerated timelines.

Our \$28.5-billion plan for transit expansion in the GTA will help us secure a more prosperous future and will allow us to connect communities across Toronto, Markham and Richmond Hill. Our plan will increase the region's subway network by 50%. This includes by delivering:

- the Ontario Line, which will connect neighbourhoods like Liberty Village and Flemingdon Park to rapid transit and help address the dangerous overcrowding on the TTC's Line 1 at the Bloor-Yonge station;

- the Yonge North extension, which extends the TTC's Line 1 to major employment centres in Markham and Richmond Hill;

- the Scarborough subway extension, extending Line 2 further into Scarborough; and

- the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, which will improve connectivity along Eglinton Avenue and enable future access to Pearson International Airport.

Our plan is ambitious, but we cannot afford not to be. By 2030, we will welcome over one million more people to the greater Toronto area, bringing the total population to over eight million. By 2045, that number is expected to hit 10 million. While this is excellent news, these volumes will only increase the challenges facing our already overburdened transit system. We must act now if we are to prepare ourselves for the future adequately.

In March, I had the privilege of joining the Premier and the Associate Minister of Transportation to announce two requests for qualifications to advance tunnelling work on the Scarborough subway extension and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, the first phase of work for these two projects. And earlier this month, our government issued two requests for qualifications for the Ontario Line. These RFQs, issued through Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx, mark the first steps of the procurement process for these projects.

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These milestones represent real progress in our plan to build a transportation network where new transit is built

faster, at a lower cost, getting people where they need to go, when they want to get there. And this proposed legislation is another step to equip our government with the tools we need to deliver a modern, integrated transit network.

Our vision for transit in Ontario is about more than building. It's also about laying the foundation for the creation of complete communities. The expansion of core infrastructure in support of delivering much-needed housing supply to a growing population is a key priority of our government.

By working closely with our partners in the private sector, we are exploring how mixed-use development connected to transit stations can create more dynamic and more livable communities. Our approach to transit-oriented communities, led by the Associate Minister of Transportation, will increase transit ridership and reduce congestion while creating jobs and a mix of housing, including affordable housing. This is a tremendous opportunity to improve people's lives by connecting their homes and jobs in ways that reduce congestion, increase the GTA's housing supply, and keep our priority transit projects on budget. It's part of our plan to improve the transportation network and connect people to places right across Ontario.

I'm happy to report that this proposed legislation and transit expansion plan has broad support from industry leaders and stakeholders. They understand the stakes and the need to deliver more transit for this region as soon as possible.

Last week, the Toronto Region Board of Trade announced their support, calling the proposed legislation "a meaningful contribution to increasing the speed and reducing the cost of the delivery of essential transit projects." Like us, they believe that residents have become increasingly cynical about the prospect of meaningful transit infrastructure improvement within a reasonable time frame, and they said that this needs to change.

The Labourers' International Union of North America called our plan "a common-sense measure in a region that is serious about transit expansion, in a region that desperately needs it." They understand the potential that these projects have to reduce congestion, improve commutes, and provide relief for our overburdened subway lines. As they put it, this act will enable us to "finish what we've started and to do so in a responsible and fair manner. That's what the region needs and that's what people want."

The Toronto Financial District Business Improvement Area called our proposed measures "reasonable given the urgent need for increased transit capacity in the region's largest business district."

Developers like the Ontario Home Builders' Association and the Building Industry and Land Development Association are also supportive of getting shovels in the ground as soon as possible. As they put it, this legislation is "all the more important today to support post-pandemic jobs and recovery efforts, to make Ontario open for business, reduce red tape, and directly support job creation through the construction of critical infrastructure."

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario has also voiced their support for the legislation and projects, particularly the Ontario Line, which they have said "will provide positive impacts for the region and enable a growing number of commuters to take transit from the suburbs into the downtown area, while avoiding the critical and over-capacity Yonge and Bloor station."

These are just a few examples of the support that these measures have from transportation and industry experts. Like us, they believe in these projects, the need to deliver them quickly, and the economic and quality-of-life benefits that they will bring. These projects are critical not just for the GTA but for the economic well-being of our province and of our country. That is why we continue to call on the federal government to join the province at the table and fund at least 40% of the four priority subway lines being built in the greater Toronto area.

We have made tremendous progress in the past working with our federal partners, and we can do it again with our rapid transit plan. We are building a modern, efficient rapid transit system that benefits all transit riders and taxpayers. Our four priority subway projects will strengthen our transit network and better connect us as a world-class province, region and city.

We want the federal government at the table with us as full partners as we move ahead with these historic subway projects because these projects—projects of this scale—cannot happen without all three levels of government at the table. The people of Ontario expect all three levels of government to work together to get new transit and new subways built. We have done great things in the past working with our federal partners, and I fully believe that they will support our plan for new subways in the GTA. Our message to Ottawa is clear: We are ready to work with you. We want you as partners for our four new subway lines.

Nous voulons que le gouvernement fédéral soit à la table des négociations avec nous, en tant que partenaires à part entière, pour faire avancer ces projets de métro sans précédent. La participation des trois ordres de gouvernement est essentielle. Sans quoi, la réalisation de projets de cette envergure ne pourrait se réaliser. C'est exactement ce à quoi s'attend la population de l'Ontario des trois ordres de gouvernement.

Nous avons fait de grandes choses dans le passé en travaillant avec nos partenaires fédéraux, et je suis convaincue qu'ils soutiendront notre projet de nouveaux métros dans la région du grand Toronto. Notre message à Ottawa est clair : nous voulons travailler avec vous pour réaliser ce projet ambitieux. Nous vous voulons comme partenaire sur nos quatre nouvelles lignes de métro.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for his bold leadership as we take the next steps in this historic moment in the evolution of transportation in Ontario. Today, the investments that we are making in the province's transit and transportation networks will secure our future as Canada's economic powerhouse. By improving the quality of service and the available options, we are fulfilling our promise to get people where they want to go when they

need to get there. Yes, we've set ourselves some ambitious goals, with even more ambitious deadlines, but that is precisely the kind of action that we need to address the challenges we are facing today and to prepare ourselves for the future.

I also want to thank the Associate Minister of Transportation for being the advocate that we need to get transit built for people across the GTA. And I'd like to thank as well my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough-Rouge Park, for his tremendous support throughout the largest transit expansion in our province's history. Together we will build a world-class rapid transit system that connects communities and gets Ontario moving.

Ensemble, nous allons construire un système de transport rapide de classe mondiale qui relie les communautés et garde l'Ontario en mouvement.

Je vous remercie. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. And since you had indicated that you are sharing your time, I now turn it over to the Associate Minister of Transportation, the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Hon. Kinga Surma: It's an honour to rise in the House to continue the debate on the Building Transit Faster Act, which, if passed, will deliver real transit relief faster for people in the greater Toronto area.

From a young age, my parents instilled in me the importance of staying informed and engaged within our community. Since starting my career in public service, my singular focus has been to advocate for the needs of my constituents so that they can thrive in this great province. I am proud to be their advocate here at Queen's Park as we work to put the people of Ontario first.

The health and well-being of all Ontarians is our government's top priority. As we continue our battle against COVID-19, safe and reliable public transit systems are critical to supporting the economy and moving people as the province begins to reopen. Thanks to the considerable efforts of all Ontarians, we're making significant progress in stopping the spread of the virus. The need for a modern and integrated rapid transit network, now more than ever, is clear. Even as this pandemic keeps millions of people at home to protect their health, we must push our priority transit projects forward to ensure the health of our economy. After we get through COVID-19, we will still need to address the overcrowding on our busiest transit lines and the congestion on our roads.

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I have the unique opportunity as Ontario's Associate Minister of Transportation to be an advocate for the GTA's transit needs. I have spoken with many people and local representatives from across the GTA for years. Increasingly, Mr. Speaker, I hear about their frustration with the state of our transportation network. I have experienced these frustrations myself during my commute, often relying on the TTC to get home from Queen's Park.

Commuters are struggling and don't have the options they need to get to where they need to go. The history of the GTA's public transit network is one filled with years

of neglect, political bickering, inaction and construction that seems to proceed at a snail's pace. This constantly slowed down the process. As the endless debate raged on, traffic and congestion in the GTA has gotten worse. Combine this with aging infrastructure and an overcrowded and outdated transportation system, and we can all agree that what was passing as the status quo cannot resolve the challenges we face today. We must take immediate action if we are to effectively address these challenges and look to the future as we build a truly integrated rapid transit network.

Our government is leading the way for bold investment in Ontario's transportation network. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, improving transit in the greater Toronto area is a top priority. Our plan connects communities and people in ways that will secure Ontario's prosperous future. The GTA is leading all of Canada in economic, population and job growth, and yet investment in transit hasn't kept pace. Our government's plan to build transit faster will show the world that Ontario is open for business. We have committed to delivering four new transit lines in the greater Toronto area. Our proposed legislation, if passed, will ensure we deliver these priority projects quickly.

When I was working at Toronto city hall, I could see that there was a lack of leadership from the province. Council argued back and forth while the province stood idly by. Suffice to say, not a lot of subway projects were built in the last 15 years when the Liberals were in power.

Our bold and ambitious plan for transit expansion in the GTA is desperately needed, Mr. Speaker. Residents expect and deserve better access to rapid transit. The time for talk is over. We must act now if we are to deliver the service they need.

Our municipal partners are on board with our transit expansion. We signed preliminary agreements with the city of Toronto, and most recently York region, to establish the processes that will allow us to achieve our shared transit goals. This is a positive next step for commuters who have been waiting for decades for relief.

We continue to call on the federal government to come to the table and fund at least 40% of these four subway projects that will provide a modern, efficient rapid transit system, benefiting all transit riders and taxpayers.

Like all the legislation our government has brought forward, our plan is committed to eliminating the roadblocks that cause delays under the existing processes while maintaining a collaboration-first approach. These projects will transform the GTA's underwhelming transit system into a modern, integrated rapid transit network that offers more options, reduces travel times, and makes life easier for the people.

Our plan is set to increase the length of the current system by 50%, constituting the largest subway expansion in Canadian history. Our priority transit projects will bring significant relief for commuters across the region. Our signature project, the brand new 15.5-kilometre subway the Ontario Line, will double the length of the previously proposed downtown relief line. This new line will allow

someone travelling between Thorncliffe Park and downtown Toronto to arrive 16 minutes faster than today's travel times. For someone who lives in the area and works downtown, that's 35 more minutes that they get to spend with their families and loved ones.

The Yonge North subway extension, spanning from Finch Station to Richmond Hill Centre, will provide a much-needed and long-awaited rapid transit connection to York region, and of course, the Eglinton Crosstown West extension will bring increased transit access to the great people of Etobicoke, connecting to the Mississauga Transitway and enabling future expansion to Toronto Pearson International Airport, a significant economic hub not just for the GTA or Ontario but for all of Canada. At last, Toronto's subway system is within reach of directly connecting to an international airport—a real sign of a world-class city.

The three-stop Scarborough subway extension will provide residents with the same level of rapid transit as downtown Toronto. Scarborough has waited a very long time for an efficient and well-planned transit system, and we are finally delivering it, Mr. Speaker.

The time to build is now. We can't afford to wait any longer. This legislation will get transit built faster.

As you heard earlier from the minister, our plan is not about just building transit; it is also about building it quickly and efficiently.

Since Premier Ford announced our government's historic plan for subway expansion last year, a lot of hard work and collaboration has been under way to pinpoint steps in the planning and construction processes that can speed up construction.

We understand that the people of the GTA need more than just tentative plans. They need real plans that will improve transit now. They need shovels in the ground as fast as possible. To do this, we must re-evaluate the existing processes that simply are not working.

One of the most frequent comments that I receive is, "Why can't we get anything built?" Mr. Speaker, that's what this legislation is addressing. The Building Transit Faster Act, if passed, will help us deliver our priority subway projects as quickly as possible to create a transit network that the people so desperately need.

This bill is the result of the hard work of dedicated public servants at the Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario as well as all the other ministries that contributed to forming this bill. I want to take the chance to thank them for their ongoing hard work and dedication to building a forward-looking transportation network that best serves the needs of all Ontarians.

The proposed Building Transit Faster Act targets processes that are most likely to delay a project, such as utility relocation, municipal permitting, land assembly, corridor control, and others. We aim to streamline timelines and redundant steps throughout this process while respecting property rights and maintaining high safety and environmental standards.

This region has waited far too long for the government to invest in transit infrastructure that serves the needs of

commuters today and well into the future. We are committed to eliminating the roadblocks of the current practices and are actively engaged in a collaboration-first approach that leverages our municipal partners. We are also committed to creating a channel for meaningful engagement with Indigenous and local communities as we move forward with these projects.

Many of these processes are already under way and have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Even through the pandemic, we have been moving forward. As it stands, we have three requests for qualification in the market to build the Eglinton West extension, the three-stop Scarborough subway and, most recently, our Ontario Line.

Metrolinx continues to hold community open houses, albeit online right now, that are allowing residents to learn more and to share their feedback in terms of our subway plan. Metrolinx will also establish local offices and online options to serve the people and businesses impacted by ongoing subway construction. Mr. Speaker, only through a healthy dialogue can we build the relationships that will allow us to better serve the needs of the communities along these important transit corridors.

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As we heard earlier today, today's proposed solutions could have saved three years on the delivery of the Eglinton Crosstown. That's three more years of unnecessary congestion for residents and lost foot traffic for businesses along Eglinton. This lack of coordination is completely unacceptable. If the previous government had introduced this legislation instead of us, we would be enjoying the benefits of the Eglinton Crosstown today.

History has shown us that major infrastructure projects can be disruptive. Most reasonable people are accepting of that fact. However, Mr. Speaker, their patience runs thin if work can't be done quickly. We aren't going to repeat past mistakes. We are going to take advantage of this opportunity to find ways to build transit faster. There is far too much at stake. We are taking a practical and sensible approach that gets shovels in the ground sooner. Our plan for GTA transit expansion is ambitious, but our residents deserve nothing less.

It's not just about building faster; it's also about building better. As part of our historic transit expansion plan, we're focusing on building new transit while also providing real opportunities to build mixed-use communities connected to transit stations. We cannot continue to build transit stations using out-of-date planning principles. The unprecedented growth that the GTA has experienced and that will continue for decades to come gives us a chance to do something different, to develop sustainable communities focused on better connecting people to efficient public transit, quality public space and housing, all while enhancing the region's economic opportunity.

Building transit-oriented communities will enable the actual integration of transit, housing and jobs, plus critical social infrastructure like daycares, community centres and other vital services that communities need. Transit-oriented communities will increase ridership and reduce

congestion; create jobs and a mix of housing options near transit, including affordable housing; catalyze mixed-use communities based on sound planning principles; enable the province to capture revenue from partnerships to offset the station construction costs to save taxpayer dollars; and, of course, stimulate the economy through major projects for the years following COVID-19.

We have a tremendous opportunity to improve people's lives by connecting their homes and jobs in ways that reduce congestion, increase the GTA's housing supply and keep our priority projects on budget. As well as providing better access to better transit, these projects will also offer a chance to live and work closer to home.

The partnership between Metrolinx and Woodbine Entertainment Group is an excellent example of how we are doing things differently to deliver transit infrastructure. We are working with the private sector to build a new GO Transit station along Highway 27 near Woodbine Race-track on the Kitchener GO rail line. This partnership is expected to save taxpayer money and bring in an estimated \$90 million in revenue over the lifespan of the station. It will also offer opportunities to live and work near a significant employer and entertainment destination, as well as provide better access to the local community and jobs.

Another example of this on the GO network is the new Mimico GO station. The new station will include a new accessible station building, pedestrian tunnels and elevators, refurbished platforms, new entrances to the station and below-grade parking. The plan is to have third-party investment pay for this refurbished station at no cost to the taxpayer.

Just a few kilometres down the Lakeshore West line, a positive step towards delivering transit relief to the Humber Bay Shores community was realized last week. Metrolinx released the updated initial business case for Park Lawn GO under the transit-oriented communities program that shows that a new GO station is viable through third-party investment—again, at little or no cost to the taxpayer.

These are precisely the type of projects we're hoping to deliver for new rapid transit stations in the GTA that are a part of our subway expansion plan. This is how you build a sustainable transit system.

I recently had the privilege of hosting a series of round table discussions with industry stakeholders and community members that continue to inform our government's transit-oriented communities program. I want to thank all of the participants. Their feedback has been critical in building the TOC program. We heard that each community would need a tailored plan that best fits the community and the businesses in the area. I could not agree more. The one-size-fits-all approach does not work for an area as diverse and dispersed as the GTA. Transit-oriented communities will connect more people's homes and jobs to transit and reduce congestion, while improving our transportation network. This is part of our plan to improve the transportation network and connect people to places right across Ontario. Our plan will have a positive benefit on people's lives.

To build projects of this magnitude, however, we need everyone at the table. I want to reiterate our call on the federal government to commit to paying their fair share of at least 40% of the four nationally significant subway projects.

I want to thank Premier Ford for his bold vision and commitment to getting the job done right. I also want to thank the lovely lady sitting right in front of me, the Minister of Transportation, for her tireless dedication to preparing the province's transportation sector for the needs of our future generation as our region's population continues to grow.

Our government is committed to working to end gridlock, while making public transit an attractive, affordable and low-stress alternative for Ontario workers and their families. This commitment doesn't cease just because there is a pandemic. We must carry on delivering real transit relief. Now more than ever, the importance of reducing overcrowding and providing more options for public transit has become very clear.

As I conclude, I want to say that it is truly an honour to have a chance to support the minister as our government makes historic investments in Ontario's transportation network. Each day, I come into work with a renewed commitment to serving the best interests of my constituents in the best riding of the province, Etobicoke Centre, and, of course, all Ontarians.

We will build a transportation network that better serves families, commuters and businesses in the GTA. Together, we are building a smart, fiscally sustainable, integrated rapid transit system. The time to build is now, and this legislation will help us get there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It's now time for questions. I recognize the member from Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the Minister and the Associate Minister of Transportation for their comments. I was listening intently. One of the things the Minister of Transportation said early on was that decades of political posturing has delayed transit projects, and I agree that the Liberals didn't complete a lot of stuff.

The one that's near and dear to me is Highway 69. A former Liberal MPP from my riding was complaining about this for more than 15 years, back to the 1990s. There still remains a 68-kilometre, two-lane gap between Key River and Parry Sound. I asked the previous Minister of Transportation if he would commit to completing this; I didn't really get an answer. I'm hoping the Minister of Transportation can make that commitment so we don't have another decade of delayed projects.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'll turn it over to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Our government is committed to ensuring that Ontario's roads continue to be among the safest in North America. We are developing, for the first time in the province's history, a series of regional transportation plans.

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A few months ago, I launched the first draft transportation plan for southern Ontario, and we're in the process of

developing a plan for northern Ontario as well. We want to make sure that our Northern Highways Program is one that meets the climate and the needs of drivers in the north.

I can tell you that members on this side of the House—both sides of the House, but in our caucus—from the north are strong advocates of making sure that we are upgrading and improving our highways in the north, including Highway 69. So we will continue to work on that. When I have a little bit more to report, I will report directly to the member opposite on Highway 69.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I wish I had the time to share with all of you the quotes and messages from residents and businesses—in particular small businesses—on what this announcement means to our communities north of the 416. But on behalf of the residents who have reached out to me time and again, I just want to say: Thank you, Minister; thank you, Associate Minister; thank you, Premier; and thank you to the government for finally delivering on a promise that had been made to our communities, in particular Richmond Hill, again and again by the previous government that never followed through, but our government has.

I want to ask for an update from the minister or the associate minister to tell us about the progress that we've made in municipalities like Toronto, and in particular, York region as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member for the question. Recently—only a few weeks ago—we announced a major step forward in our plans to extend the Yonge subway north into Richmond Hill and Markham, by announcing that we have the preliminary agreement with York region. York regional council endorsed our preliminary agreement just recently. Mayor Scarpitti called that moment “a major step forward” in finally delivering the Yonge subway north into York region.

I also represent an area that includes York region, and I know how important transit is to people in York region and north of the 416. So many residents commute out of York region for work, and many are now starting to commute in as well. So developing a modern transit network is essential to people and businesses in York region, and we are very pleased to be able to reach that important step with York region.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the Associate Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Transportation for your presentation today. I have a question. When I was listening to your presentation, you emphasized the need for the federal government to provide 40% of support to the four priority transit projects. The suggestion is that potentially these projects won't be able to go forward without their support. That's different from what Premier Ford said when he made the announcement in April. He said clearly that if the federal government does not provide

the support, the Ontario government will proceed anyway. If the federal government doesn't provide its support, will you proceed with these four priority projects?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Minister of Transportation for a response.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for the question. When the Premier, the then-Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation announced our bold plan for a modern and rapid transit system in the city of Toronto and across the GTA, we announced that we were finally moving forward with much-needed transit in this area. It's a plan that we are committed to doing.

But we were also able to move forward in a collaborative way with our municipal partners. It took a lot of work between the city of Toronto, York region and our government to get to a place where Toronto city council endorsed our plan, as well as the accelerating authorities required to deliver that plan. As I just mentioned, York region has endorsed our plan as well.

We're moving forward in a collaborative way, member opposite. That involves the federal government participating as a full partner, and that's why we continue to call on them. We're confident that they will, because they know how important this plan is to delivering economic growth in this region.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Stan Cho: The first thing is to applaud to the minister. I want to get that on the record there, because this is just fantastic. I'm so excited. I'm from a riding that has the dubious distinction of being the only riding in the country that has two subway lines that dead-end in the neighbourhood. We've been waiting decades for this, so it's finally some really great news.

But I want to talk about some of the roadblocks that transit has hit in the past. We've had delay after delay on our transit system. How are we going to avoid that? How are we going to streamline the processes to make sure that as we move forward, we're not going to face those same challenges, and finally get transit built in this great city?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for raising that very, very valid point. I feel the pain, because I was at city hall for a number of years and I watched the constant fighting between plans, the constant changing of plans, causing great uncertainty.

But what is certain, Mr. Speaker, is how much the people of the city of Toronto and York region want us to build and take action. That is exactly why the Premier is very much committed to making sure we build our four key subway lines, and that is exactly why we are presenting this legislation in the House.

Like I said in my remarks, Mr. Speaker, the most common question I get as the Associate Minister of Transportation is: Why can't we build something? Let's stop arguing. Let's have a collaboration-first approach, which Minister Mulroney has certainly set an example of for all politicians, I think, in the country. And let's just get shovels in the ground.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further questions?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour la ministre. J'ai apprécié votre allocution ce matin.

Vous le savez, dans le Nord, on est limité dans nos transports. J'ai entendu d'autres ministres du Nord dire qu'éventuellement le Northlander reviendrait. Mais dans ce projet de loi, on n'a aucune discussion du Northlander. J'aimerais entendre de vous quand on peut s'attendre à ce revienne que le train Northlander en opération dans les comtés du Nord, où on a besoin de transports ferroviaires.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie le membre de l'opposition pour la question. Notre gouvernement, je crois, s'est montré dédié à développer le réseau de transports dans le Nord. Juste hier, nous avons annoncé une route de contournement à Cochrane, et nous étions très heureux de pouvoir annoncer cette route de contournement qui a été longuement attendue dans le Nord.

Pour ce qui concerne le Northlander, c'est bien sûr quelque chose que j'entends souvent des membres du Nord de notre caucus aussi. Pendant cette période de COVID, nous avons annoncé que la responsabilité pour l'Ontario Northland Transportation Commission est venue sous le ministère des Transports. Nous avons pu annoncer pendant cette période de COVID, lors du retrait d'une compagnie privée, que l'ONTC allait finalement donner des services de transports en commun de Thunder Bay jusqu'à Winnipeg. C'était la première fois dans l'histoire de la province que nous avons pu faire ça. Ça fait partie de notre plan pour améliorer les transports dans le Nord, et on va continuer à le faire.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There isn't enough time for another question and response. Therefore, further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you once again to the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation for your presentation on Bill 171. I have four comments that I would like to address briefly before I move to my speech, which will summarize some of the concerns that we heard during committee, as well as the amendments that we introduced to turn Bill 171 into a model bill for what transit planning and transit construction could look like. I'll go to my four comments first.

The first is the government's interest for transit-oriented development. Transit-oriented development is also something that we support. What is critical for transit-oriented development is that it has affordable housing requirements to it, because we do have an affordable housing crisis in the city of Toronto and beyond. There are some movements being made to move forward with transit-oriented development at the Park Lawn and Mimico stations, as well as the Woodbine Entertainment Group station in Premier Ford's riding. I would very much like to see the commitments, the legally binding commitments, that have been made with the developer to ensure that a meaningful amount of affordable housing is part of those station developments, because the devil is in the details.

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The second piece is around the arguments that were made that there are reasons why transit construction is

delayed, including a lack of coordination between utilities and transit development or transit construction companies, as well as the delays in the expropriation process. I've heard these arguments made on numerous occasions. What I would very much like to see are very specific, written-down examples of when these delays have impacted the progress of a transit expansion project, including the Eglinton Crosstown project. I've heard a lot of mention of them, but I haven't seen the details and I'd very much like to.

The third is the summary of some of the residents who came to the committee meetings via the online process and spoke about how they were being treated by Metrolinx during the early works phase of the construction process with the Ontario Line. I would like to call the interaction between Metrolinx and the residents collaborative; I wouldn't say it is collaborative at this point. Residents are giving examples of seeing soil samples being done, markings on their street being done, rig trucks arriving in their neighbourhood, and they've received no consultation or information from Metrolinx at all. That is creating unnecessary fear because there is so much unknown about this project so far.

I'm enthused to hear that there is some interest in communicating with Metrolinx around how they could improve their dialogue with residents to make sure that some of their worst fears are allayed, because some simple communication in advance of rig trucks arriving would make people feel a little bit better.

The final piece is the one that I addressed in the question that I asked the Minister of Transportation around the funding piece for the four priority transit projects, the 40% request that is being made to the federal government to contribute their fair share to the \$28.5-billion price tag that we currently have right now for these four transit projects. Premier Ford said very clearly that if that money does not come, he will proceed regardless. The city of Toronto is already off the hook with funding these transit projects. That's part of the agreement that has been made. So it does seem that if the federal government doesn't come to the table—and maybe they are going to; I don't know; I'm trying to find out as best as you. But if they don't come to the table, then what happens?

It would be good to hear from this government that there is still going to be a commitment to build those four priority transit projects, because in my experience working on transit, it's not the construction process that leads to delays in the final product. In fact, when I've spoken to experts who spend their entire time assessing how quickly we proceed on transit projects, we're actually pretty good when it comes to building transit projects on time, once the construction is started. The real issues are around planning and plans being changed, which the Fords have had a history of doing, and the second piece is around funding. If the funding is not there—and right now, the funding for these transit projects is not there—then we could be in a situation where, once again, residents will be left waiting. So I would like some response in writing around where your commitment is to these projects if the

federal government doesn't cough up as you are hoping that they will do.

So those are the four comments that I would like to make before I begin the more formal aspect of my presentation. So—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Forgive me for having to interrupt, but it is now 10:15.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Hundreds of residents of apartment buildings in Crescent Town in Beaches–East York, as well as elsewhere in the riding and across the city are terrified.

Crescent Town is a warm, vibrant community of primarily racialized people, many of whom are newcomers, many of whom are essential workers, many of whom lost their jobs due to COVID-19. This is a community that has been hit hard. Some people work multiple poorly paid essential jobs to which they must take public transit. If they become ill, they can't self-isolate. They frequently share apartments with large families, so Michael Garron Hospital has been seeing multiple members of the same family hospitalized with COVID-19.

Now many are haunted by eviction. They have followed the Premier's advice to feed their families first if they didn't also have money for rent, but the landlord, Pinedale Properties, has not heeded his advice to work things out. Instead, they have been served eviction notices. In some cases, the manager has banged on their doors, with a debit machine in hand, telling them "COVID is nothing," and threatening them with immediate eviction if they don't pay.

Bill 184 enables landlords like Pinedale to evict tenants without a hearing if they believe that those tenants have reneged on a payment plan, but what if they get sick and can't work or otherwise lose their jobs?

We need immediate rent subsidies, and we need a plan to ensure that no COVID-related evictions will ever be permitted in Ontario. Anything less is cruel. It's absolutely crucial that the government act now.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to say that this has been a tough period with the COVID pandemic, but good news is ahead. We're seeing the patios start to open in York region. Thornhill is very excited and anxiously waiting.

I have some good news to report, which is that SmartCentres, which operates the stores and restaurants around Disera Drive just north of the Promenade Mall, has agreed to work with myself, the city of Vaughan and Councillor Shefman to see about closing off a block of Disera, between Centre Street and the light where CIBC is, so that we can enjoy a street-wide patio.

I'm looking forward to seeing a lot of the residents there. I think Thornhill can set an example for the rest of the province in terms of finding opportunities for people to socially distance, but socialize all the same, outside in the nice weather in the coming months ahead.

Some of the restaurants that are there: Mezza Notte, Bagel World, Maple Sushi, Subway, Marble Slab, Copper Branch, Boneyard Grill, Halibut House, Meron To Go, Maple Arc Grill and the Greek Stop. So there are lots of opportunities to eat and also socialize.

I want to wish good luck to all the businesses. It's tough on them. I hope everybody is going to have patience as the various regions open. Let's all work together to make sure that this is successful.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: When COVID-19 hit, London acted quickly and decisively. City hall passed measures to support businesses, help the vulnerable and collaborate with stakeholders in their many task force meetings.

Wise and prudent stewards of the public purse, London boasts a triple-A credit rating, earned consecutively for the last 43 years. But COVID-19 has put London on the brink of financial crisis, and we need direct financial support from the province immediately.

As the hub of southwestern Ontario, London is a leader in health care, medical innovation, education, digital creative, arts and culture, tourism, agribusiness and many more. London supports a variety of communities, including Middlesex, Elgin, Oxford, Lambton, Chatham-Kent, Huron and Perth. To ignore London is to ignore all of southwestern Ontario, which the previous Liberal government did at their peril.

Tax dollars travel from London to Queen's Park, but rarely are seen again. During this crisis, we need those same tax dollars to travel back down to London. As Mayor Ed Holder states, "When it comes to essential services, municipalities represent both the front line and the bottom line."

Today, I'm asking the Premier and his government for \$30 million in emergency funding for London. Without provincial support, cities will have to hike taxes, cut essential services, and everyday Ontarians will bear the cost. It's time for this government to step up, help with the heavy lifting and bring much-needed relief to London.

1020

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The date: March 17; the year: 2020. That was the official beginning of Ontario's state of emergency and global pandemic. The results of this pandemic have been devastating. It has been three months since the province declared a state of emergency. Remember, our primary goal was to keep Ontarians safe and healthy. There was no playbook; we had to create one. Now, in re-opening the province, some of us want to go faster while others say, "Slow down." Regardless of one's point of

view, our government is taking a deliberate, well thought-out approach to getting Ontario back on its feet.

On a local level, in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, Dajcor Aluminum, located in Chatham, was able to quickly adapt their operation to produce medical sector products, some of which were in the form of modular partition systems. They were able to maintain a large percentage of employees in order to work on these products. Nice going, Dajcor. You helped answer the call as a result of this pandemic.

One thing has been true throughout this crisis: Ontarians are stronger together. We have seen countless examples of this from all corners of this great province, from drive-by birthday parties to window visits at long-term-care homes to our small and medium-sized businesses retooling to support the fight against this terrible disease. Together, we will get through this pandemic, and our economy and employment will rebound. We will be even stronger than pre-COVID. I'm sure that 2020 will be a year marked with an asterisk.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today in Niagara region and across this province, essential front-line workers are calling a day of action to extend pandemic pay to everyone. I am tempted to list the number of valuable members of our front-line health care workers currently excluded from pandemic pay. It is so tempting to point out how many of them deal directly with COVID-19 patients and just don't make the Premier's all-star list.

I could do that, you know; it is a worthwhile statement. But I think it misses a story I find more interesting about pandemic pay because, as many times as I get front-line workers reaching out to me, I get an equal amount of executive directors, administrative leads and senior levels of management reaching out on behalf of their front-line staff.

One executive director at Martindale Place, a congregate care facility in St. Catharines, reached out to my office twice on this matter. For them, it is not about the extra few dollars; it is about recognizing the real work and the real sacrifices that front-line workers do. These local leaders care so intensely for the people that are sacrificing so much right now. It's the non-profits and service managers who reach out because their shelter, community outreach team or hospital staff are excluded. For them, it is about the appreciation of their sacrifices.

So, Mr. Premier, do what is right: Expand this list. These heroes deserve more than empty words during a press conference.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. John Fraser: It has been months since we've seen the first case of COVID-19 in this province. We've learned that physical distancing, frequent hand-washing and wearing masks are the three most important things we can do to protect others and ourselves.

We've yet to get one critical part right, and that's universal masking. As we're starting to re-open our economy, people will inevitably come closer together. Universal masking will play a greater role in allowing our economy to continue to open. We've seen how places around the world, like Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, have been able to manage the spread of the virus effectively with universal masking, whether it's mandatory or a societal norm. It's simply not good enough for us to say, "Wear a mask when you're outside."

I'd like to thank everyone in Ontario, the United Way in my city, and Masks 4 Canada for all the work in this area, but we know that you can't do it alone. So I'm calling on the government to do the three following things—and actually, us; we need to lead by example: Wear a mask when you're indoors when you can't physically distance; when we're here in the Legislature—I know it's hard in here, but when we're in the building; and when you're shopping. It's about protecting others. Undertake an aggressive public advocacy campaign so that people can understand why we need to do it, both for health and for our economy. The government must, like the federal government, procure masks for people who cannot afford them. I think it's critical that the government do that so they can work in concert with municipalities to ensure that the most vulnerable people who can't afford them are able to get non-medical masks.

SCLERODERMA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Michael Parsa: Speaker, the month of June is Scleroderma Awareness Month, and today I'd like to draw your attention to this little-known but often debilitating condition.

Scleroderma refers to a group of rare disorders that involve the hardening and tightening of the skin and connective tissues. Depending on the area of the body is affected, this can result in stiff joints and reduced mobility, as well as digestive, lung, kidney and heart issues. In severe cases, it can even be life-threatening. While it affects more women than men, anyone can get scleroderma, and it can be caused by a variety of factors, from environmental to genetic.

Speaker, I'm sad to say that as of this moment, there is no cure. That's why it's so important to use this month as an opportunity to talk about scleroderma and to raise awareness and funds so that some day soon, no person will ever have to deal with these symptoms again.

Since 2007, the Scleroderma Society of Ontario has done amazing work by advocating for and improving the quality of life of those living with the condition. They raise awareness, support research—of those living with the condition.

Mr. Speaker, because of the pandemic, no traditional walk or run will be held this year, but you can still visit scleroderma.ca to join the virtual event and support this worthy and important cause.

Scleroderma can be an incredibly difficult and painful condition to live with, but as long as there's hope for a cure—and there is a great deal of hope—we need to find it.

FOSTER CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: Today, I wish to speak about the changes that this government has made to foster care.

During this pandemic, when children and youth in care need more protection than ever before, this government has quietly loosened the rules that keep them safe. In May, the government increased the number of children that can be placed in a foster home. The previous limit of four, which doesn't include biological children, was already high.

Further, while increasing the size of homes, this government reduced the important oversight measures that keep kids safe. In-person home visits and interviews were scrapped and replaced with inadequate home inspections. There was even a government communication early on in the pandemic asking agencies to refrain from requesting police record checks. These rules are meant to ensure that the living situation is safe and healthy for children. It's the responsibility of this government to make sure that inspections of care settings can be done safely.

Rather than cutting these regulations that are meant to keep children out of harm's way, they have changed the rules that make children and youth in care more vulnerable to abuse. We need these oversight mechanisms to be restored immediately to ensure our children's safety.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE U19 WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Dave Smith: COVID-19 has hit the hospitality and tourism industry especially hard. In total, all of the industries that are part of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries represent \$75 billion in economic activity for our province.

Sport and the tourism industry associated with sports are a major contributor. That's why I'm happy to stand here today and talk about an event that was held in my riding just this past summer.

We had the great opportunity and pleasure to host the world women's under-19 lacrosse championships. It was a collaboration with our local lacrosse associations, Trent University, Sir Sandford Fleming College and the city of Peterborough. It was also the very first event that I as a newly elected official was able to secure provincial funding for.

We had teams from Australia, Belgium, China, the Czech Republic, England, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, South Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Scotland, Chinese Taipei and Wales. And North America was represented not only by teams from Canada and the United States, but we also had First Nations proudly represented by Haudenosaunee.

The 10-day event generated \$3.4 million in economic impact for our community alone.

There are so many volunteers I'd like to thank, but I don't have the time for it, so I'll centre out just a couple whose leadership made it happen: Fred Blowes, Lois Tuffin, Cheryl MacNeill and Kelly Roberts.

1030

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Vincent Ke: I'm pleased to report that two long-term-care homes, Chartwell Gibson and Extendicare Bayview in my riding of Don Valley North, are now COVID-19 free. Currently, no resident or staff member has the virus. They will remain vigilant going forward as they rely on health and safety protocols to keep the vulnerable seniors healthy and safe.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of the homes' dedicated staff, with the support and co-operation of the long-term-care residents, their families and their community, this is a wonderful achievement worth celebrating. Both homes update their COVID-19 situation weekly to residents, their families, and our office as well. They communicate all outbreak information with honesty, transparency, compassion and hope.

When the Don Valley North community realized that long-term-care homes in our area needed help, they didn't hesitate to rally around the cause. From food and PPE donations to kind words of encouragement, these long-term-care homes received support when they needed it most.

Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful to the excellent people of Don Valley North, who care about the struggles of others and show up to offer help.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our members' statements for this morning, which means it's now time for oral questions.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just before we start our leads—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins has a point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. Is the Premier going to be attending question period? Because if he's going to be late, we'd like to stand down—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): —to make reference to the absence of any member.

Again, it is now time for oral questions.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'd actually, on a point of order, like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down my leads—if the Premier is not here—and wait till the Premier arrives.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking unanimous consent of the House to stand down the lead questions for the opposition. Agreed? I heard a no.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, nearly 1,800 seniors have lost their lives in Ontario long-term-care homes—1,800 seniors losing their lives in long-term-care homes in our province, and countless more have suffered neglect and abuse and even starvation. Yesterday, the

Premier repeated his claim that Ontario did not fail residents in long-term-care homes. The Premier has refused to hold himself and his minister accountable.

Long-term-care facilities are licensed by this province. Can the Premier tell us whether any will lose their licences, and if so, which ones?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care to reply.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question.

For 15 years, the long-term-care sector was neglected and ignored. Our government created a Ministry of Long-Term Care in the summer of 2019 and, in just a few months, we had already begun the good work, the necessary work, to transform long-term care. We understood the staffing crisis, and we had an expert panel working on that. We understood the capacity issues. We were at 99% capacity, and even increasing, with unconventional spaces to meet demand—demand that had grown to a wait-list of 37,000 people under the 15 years of the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP. Our government was actively working on solutions, and then COVID hit. The good work that we are doing now will continue to transition to a 21st-century long-term-care system.

The lives lost must not be in vain. The suffering and the hardship that COVID-19 has caused—we will continue to transition to create the necessary changes needed to support residents in long-term care now and in the future.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, when the government won't admit its own failure, I don't know how anybody can trust the commitments that this minister is stating today.

To date, not a single home has lost a licence, despite levels of neglect so severe that the police have had to be notified.

Orchard Villa is a for-profit facility operated by Extencare, the same company that recently hired the Premier's campaign spokesperson to lobby on their behalf at Queen's Park. The Canadian Armed Forces reported that that facility was infested with cockroaches, residents were being left in soiled diapers, and one person literally choked to death while being fed lying down. The Premier finally got dragged into taking control of that facility after workers and families spent weeks and weeks pleading for intervention and 69 seniors died.

Will the for-profit corporations making money from Orchard Villa lose their licence to operate that facility?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

The issues surrounding licences are complex and largely involve the lack of capacity that was, really, the responsibility of the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP. The capacity issues in our long-term-care system were being addressed in a fulsome way, in an active way, when COVID-19 hit.

The solutions to long-term care require a modernization of our system—an integrated system that is being planned

and worked on, as we speak, with Ontario Health and Ontario health teams. The good work that is being done there is—the duty of care of our long-term-care homes is non-negotiable. They must keep our residents safe.

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has caused hardship around the world.

Our government is taking action and will continue to take action to fix this issue.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Issues of neglect leading to death are not complex. They're pretty straightforward.

Nearly 300 seniors have died in homes owned by Sienna Inc., the for-profit long-term-care operator that recently hired several Conservative insiders and the Ford government's staff to lobby on their behalf. Sienna ran the Altamont facility, where the Armed Forces found residents were denied meals and were left completely unprotected from COVID-19 when it came a-knockin'. And their senior executives were the ones who mocked families who were expressing outrage and grief.

Sienna is licensed to operate 37 long-term-care facilities in our province. Will they lose a single licence? Will there be any consequences whatsoever for these homes?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you, again, for the question.

Ontarians do have questions, and that is what we are going to address with the public commission—public input, public hearings and a public report. There are appropriate processes in place to deal with this. Those processes must be followed.

We are looking at processes that will enable our homes to transition from old 1970s-built homes with ward rooms. I can tell you that those ward rooms were part of the problem.

The redevelopment that languished for 15 years—since 2011, only 611 beds were built under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP.

Our government took long-term care seriously and was addressing the long-standing issues that had been neglected for so many years. Our government is the government that takes long-term care seriously.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but I have to correct the minister: People are not just having questions. Ontarians are horrified. They are outraged. And they are grieving the loved ones they have lost in long-term care—almost 1,800 deaths in this province.

Yesterday, the Premier indicated that he is now considering proposals by long-term-care lobbyists to limit the legal liability for the spread of COVID-19 in their facilities. Can you believe that? He's going to actually help them get through this and not be held legally responsible.

We know that several families have filed statements of claim detailing horrific levels of neglect and carelessness

against for-profit facilities, including Sienna, who referred to the claims as “blood-sucking lawsuits.” These are the folks that the Premier is getting prepared to protect, not the seniors who lost their lives in long-term care. Can the Premier tell us which for-profit lobbyists he, his ministers and staff have met with to discuss this?

1040

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I haven’t met with any lobbyists, so I don’t know where the opposition is coming up with this. But I want to compliment our Minister of Long-Term Care, who has more experience than all opposition folks combined. It’s easy to play the armchair quarterback, but we’re actually getting something done, as they sat there—the Leader of the Opposition sat there for 10 years and did absolutely nothing to protect long-term-care homes. They built 611 beds in 10 years? You’ve got to be kidding me.

So it’s pretty rich to hear the opposition leader sit there and criticize us when we’re actually getting things done. We’re fixing a problem that they destroyed for 10 years with their buddies, the Liberals. That’s the real problem. This didn’t just pop up overnight. This has been ongoing for decades, and they were part of the problem. We’re going to fix the problem.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Minister of Health is a Minister of Health that’s on the record wanting to privatize more of our health care system, so I have no confidence whatsoever that she is going to take to task these private operators of long-term care.

For many families, launching a legal challenge was the only way that they could protect their loved ones in long-term-care homes, because this government was dragging its feet. In April, while the Premier was insisting that there was an iron ring around long-term care, which there was not, family members of residents of homes like Eatonville, Altamont and Orchard Villa were detailing the very dangerous conditions that their loved ones were enduring. They went to court to fight for their loved ones, while the government refused to act.

That is the fact, and the Premier cannot deny that that is the fact. Why, then, is the Premier offering legal protection to homes that didn’t protect their residents?

Hon. Doug Ford: I’ll give you the facts, Mr. Speaker: Because of the job that we have done—and it’s a tragedy, what’s happened, because of the systemic problem that’s happened over decades as they sat by and did absolutely nothing.

We saved hundreds and hundreds of lives by going in there, testing the front-line workers, testing all the patients, making sure we’re after the people with asymptomatic symptoms, so we were able to catch them. Even one of the long-term-care homes, the front-line folks I talked to once said, “You know something? The best thing you did is actually test the people who were asymptomatic. That saved lives.”

We ended up getting hospitals in there to make sure the long-term-care patients were protected. We ended up asking the military to come in to support us.

But the good news is, we’re going to continue doing it until it’s fixed. We aren’t going to sit on our hands for 10 years like the Leader of the Opposition did.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is right in one thing: They ended up finally getting dragged into doing something proactive to protect seniors in long-term care, and it took them far too long. It’s clear that the Ford government would rather defend for-profit long-term-care homes than the residents who live in them.

Yesterday, the minister said that she took “swift and decisive actions” in long-term care. But when we joined the front-line workers who called for the government to take control of these facilities back in April, the minister dismissed that request. It’s on the record. She said, “Other provinces do things differently,” because other provinces were much quicker to respond.

It was six weeks before the government finally began taking over homes. During those six weeks, 1,370 residents died. And now, it looks like the government is moving to protect for-profit care once again. Why is the government protecting for-profit long-term-care facilities from legal liability rather than pulling licences from the for-profit long-term-care homes that have so brutally failed our seniors?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you once again for the question. Looking back at what has transpired over the last several months, I can tell you with great clarity that our government took early action, beginning February 3—despite the narrative from the opposition—to address the issues that we were confronted with.

The reality was, after many years of neglect, our homes were in tremendous pressure capacity-wise and in a staffing crisis. We took early measures: active screening, essential visitors only—and that was a hard decision to make, but it was necessary—working with our hospitals, integrating. And that is really a key point: understanding how we transition from the past to the future to allow an aging population to get the care they need. New thinking is required, and that’s exactly what our government is working on as we speak, transitioning our long-term-care system to a modern long-term-care system.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Last week, the Premier was forced to backtrack, and told the assembly, “Of course, there’s systemic racism in Ontario. There’s systemic racism across this country.” A lot of us “have never walked a mile in someone’s shoes who has faced racism,” is what the Premier said.

Over the last week, thousands upon thousands of Black and Indigenous people have spoken out about their experiences with racism, particularly when it comes to interactions with police. Does the Premier believe that

systemic racism exists in policing in Ontario? If so, what is he prepared to do about it?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I think we all understand and recognize that policing and community safety have changed in the last number of years. The issues faced today by police services and the communities they serve are increasingly complex. As part of our government's \$174-million commitment to address mental health and addiction this year, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Health announced \$18.3 million in new funding to support those affected by mental health and addiction challenges in the justice sector. This includes \$6.95 million for new mobile crisis teams with dedicated safe beds and transitional case managers.

I think we all understand that when almost 40% of police calls are interacting with individuals who have mental health or addiction issues, we need to do things differently, and we're going to do things differently, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, last week the Premier said that he was prepared to listen to and understand the experiences of others when it comes to systemic racism.

Here's what they're telling us: They want investment in mental health supports, not a \$335-million cut. They want investments in youth outreach programs, not cuts to community-based outreach programs. They want investment in anti-racism initiatives, not a cut to the Anti-Racism Directorate and a truncating of the work they're doing. And they want effective police oversight, which we don't have now in the province of Ontario because instead, the government has cut all of these programs and defiantly rolled back public oversight as one of the Premier's first acts in office. If the Premier means what he says about systemic racism, will he undo any of these decisions?

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

Hon. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to take this question on behalf of our government.

Our Premier has made investments, particularly in the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan. We have taken steps to bring forward a new council that has been advising the Premier and our government when it comes to youth opportunities. The Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity was announced a couple of weeks ago, with Jamil Jivani, who is the province's advocate for community opportunities, working with young people and working with Black-led organizations as part of our Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, which funds about 50 different Black-led organizations—not all Black-led, but many Black-led organizations—in and around the GTA and Ottawa and right across the province.

We've also made an added investment in that program as a result of COVID-19 and some of the challenges in those communities when it comes to creating opportunities; \$1.5 million was announced a couple of weeks ago

to give those programs that are providing these services in our community the boost that they need so that we can help more people get the equal opportunity that they deserve

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is to the Premier. Premier, Ontario is home to a thriving agriculture sector. From dairy to poultry to delicious fruits and vegetables, good things really do grow in Ontario. Our agricultural sector continues to work around the clock to make sure we have access to high-quality and safe food during the pandemic. But as we all know, the agriculture sector has been hit hard during the COVID-19 outbreak, especially temporary foreign workers.

Premier, could you please share with the House what supports we have put in place to help these vitally important workers?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill. MPP Parsa has done an incredible job up there, Mr. Speaker; he really has. I hear it from his constituents.

1050

On behalf of all Ontarians, I want to extend my deepest condolences to the families and friends of the two farm workers who passed away from COVID-19. Our government knows that agriculture workers play a vital role in Ontario. Since the start of the COVID outbreak, we have put in a number of programs to help these vital workers, including, most recently, a \$15-million investment to help farmers better protect their employees.

We've been in contact with these farmers on a constant basis. I know our Minister of Agriculture has reached out to them. I have personally reached out to them and talked to them. Nothing is more important to us, as a government, as the people of Ontario, than to protect the workers and protect the farmers, because we rely on them to put food on our table, Mr. Speaker. With the \$15 million, they're going to be able to buy extra PPE. They're going to make sure that they don't live in a congregate living setting.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is once again to the Premier. Premier, thank you very much for the update. I agree that workers are extremely important, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our government has been resolute and steadfast in ensuring that the health and safety of all workers in this province is never compromised.

Our announcement yesterday regarding the new general workplace guidelines is about giving businesses and owners the tools and resources they need to adapt and succeed in this new reality. This set of standards will help ensure that everyone feels safe in their place of employment, because at the end of the day, nothing is more important than protecting Ontarians.

Premier, can you please explain to the House again the highlights of our announcement?

Hon. Doug Ford: Once again, nothing is more important to our government than making sure that we protect the front-line workers and all workers across this province. That is why yesterday, we unveiled a new Ontario general workplace guidance document to help employers develop robust safety plans to protect workers and patrons.

Mr. Speaker, this tool kit builds on many supports we have already provided to businesses to help them prepare to reopen, including over 133 sector-specific workplace safety guidelines and documents.

Again, we are focused on making sure that we protect the workers and the customers, be it a retail store or any other area where they interact with the public. It's our number-one priority, and I'll tell you, we're doing one heck of a job; I hear it out there. That's why we're leading North America with the lowest cases anywhere in North America. I know—

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

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Ontario's agriculture sector is now in the middle of one of the biggest workplace COVID outbreaks in the province. Despite what the Premier just said, other countries aren't sharing the confidence in Ontario, because Mexico announced yesterday that it was considering not allowing more workers to come to Ontario because of the dangerous conditions they face. And Mexico did specify Ontario, because they didn't say that they were going to disallow workers coming to BC, because they have faith in what BC is doing to protect their citizens.

This is not only a tragedy for the workers in Ontario, but it could be a long-term disaster for the agriculture sector, because confidence is key. When other countries are losing confidence in how we protect our workers, who happen to be their citizens, that's a disaster.

What is this government going to do to mitigate that, so that workers in this province who deliver our food actually feel safe?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for that question. It is a very important one, and one that we've been devoting a lot of time to in the Ministry of Health. The migrant workers are essential for food production in Ontario; we depend on them. They have come into Ontario, they have self-isolated for 14 days, they have gone into work and they have become ill.

We need to keep working on that, and we need to do the testing. I know there has been a testing facility that has been set up in Leamington. However, as of Sunday, I'm informed that there were only four people that attended.

Clearly, we need to revise the work that we're going to do. We're going to start doing testing with mobile units. We want to make sure that we can work with Ontario Health and with OMAFRA to make sure that we can reach

all of the migrant workers who have been affected by COVID. I can tell you that the assessment has already been done of the high-risk cases, and they are being treated. But I will have more to say in the supplemental.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for the response, but it bears repeating that the Mexican government has faith in BC but not in Ontario.

And in direct response to why migrant workers aren't coming to your testing: because they have to get on a bus and go to Leamington. And the one thing that people don't realize about migrant workers is that they aren't in control of their own destiny. Unlike everyone else in this room, they're not in control. Their sponsor is in control.

We asked over a month ago for the government to make sure that those front-line workers have full access to PPE. We all know, in these issues—and we should have learned it from long-term care—that time is of the essence. The government knew this was going to happen; they were warned this was going to happen; and now you're talking about putting mobile testing sites in? Why didn't you realize where the problem was, and why didn't you a month and a half ago make sure that these migrant workers had access—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members take their seats.

The Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are working diligently, as I said before, with Ontario Health and with OMAFRA to make sure that the farm owners will open the farms to allow people to be tested. We are looking at a hybrid model where we have some mobile testing.

I've been advised that if we were to do this just with mobile testing, it would take 84 days of testing in order to make sure all of the local farms in the Windsor-Essex area, for example, were covered. It would take 10 days in an assessment centre. We need to work in collaboration with the owners of the farms to make sure that all of the migrant workers can be tested.

In addition to that, as the Premier has indicated, and as has been indicated previously, we are putting \$15 million into more personal protective equipment, into more infection control and prevention, and into revising workplace standards so that people will be able to be separated apart, in both where they sleep as well as where they work.

We are doing everything that we can right now to reassure Mexico and the rest of Ontario that we are doing our best to—

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

The next question?

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Last Friday, the cystic fibrosis community was

surprised and thrilled to learn that after years of fighting, the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance finally agreed to begin negotiations with Vertex Pharmaceuticals on a purchasing price for Kalydeco and Orkambi—and congratulations to the minister and the government for that progress. Access to these life-saving drugs will make a huge difference in the quality and length of life for thousands of Ontarians, and indeed Canadian children and young adults.

Negotiating with Vertex is an important first step. Can the minister put a timeline on these talks, and will the minister provide assurances that when the drugs become available, Ontario will list both Kalydeco and Orkambi?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I know this is of great importance to you, as it is to me.

We know that those people living with cystic fibrosis are very hopeful that these new drugs will provide the relief that they're looking for and relieve some of the stress that they have to deal with each and every day, and will be available soon.

We are very pleased to understand that the conversations are continuing between Vertex and the pCPA. I wish that I could give you a timeline, but I am not able to do so because there are many other parties at the table, not just Ontario, that are having these discussions. But the fact that they are together at the table, again, is very hopeful. It is something I can assure the member that we are following very diligently, because we are also very happy to move ahead should they be able to resolve some of the issues that remain in discussions between them.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

I guess I would just urge you—as you know, I've raised the case many, many times over the last three years. Sasha and Jamie Larocque are the parents of young Joshua. Joshua's older brother is on Orkambi and does very, very well. His younger brother is up at night coughing and can't go out of the house and can't have a vacation. Obviously, the parents, and many parents across Ontario, are very, very worried during this time of COVID-19, which is also a disease, a virus, that affects breathing.

1100

Minister, given that you're going to be the largest purchaser, you and Quebec—and I'd be happy to talk to people in Quebec. I happen to know the minister. I happen to know most of them, so if that helps you, I'll do that. You're going to be the largest purchaser of Orkambi and Trikafta and Kalydeco when eventually they're on the market. Can you do everything in your power to just speed up the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance? You're their number one customer, so I think they would listen to you if you gave them a real push.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes, I can certainly assure the member that we are doing everything that we can to move the conversations forward, both with respect to Kalydeco, Orkambi and Trikafta as well. We know that different

types of drugs work better for people with different types of cystic fibrosis; it depends on the strain that they have.

But this is something that I know is very important to you. It is very important to me. It's very important to many members here who have constituents who have cystic fibrosis. There is nothing more than any of us would like than to make sure that the family that you mentioned, as well as many other families across Ontario, have a happy summer with their family members being able to breathe easily. That is something that we are continuing to do, to follow this file very diligently, and we will do everything that we can to move this process forward expeditiously.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and our committee has heard directly from tourism, festival and event operators from across the province. They're pivoting their operations and many of them are moving online this year. We heard that digital was the way to go. I know it's something our government has taken action on. Ontario has a new virtual platform that allows Ontarians to experience all that their province has to offer, all from the comfort of their own living rooms.

Can the minister please tell this House how our government is supporting artists and operators looking to provide their customers and supporters with a digital experience?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to say thank you to the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for his great question, and I think it's important given the fact that the suite of sectors we're responsible for represents about \$75 billion in normal times in economic activity and has taken at least a \$20-billion hit through this pandemic.

We used to be called the world in one province—I still call it that—and we welcome the world to our province when it is safe to do so, but right now we can only do it virtually. So we decided in March at the ministry to invest in a virtual portal called Ontario.live so that we could bring arts, culture, sport and hospitality to people's homes across the province of Ontario.

Let me tell you what you can experience there: The Art Gallery of Algoma, the Bay of Quinte virtual activities, Scandinave Spa in Blue Mountain, Adamo Estate in Orangeville, the Royal Ontario Museum, 1,000 Islands Helicopter Tours, and something we like to call Music Together, in which we invested \$150,000 so that artists across this province could perform from the safety of their own home—

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

Mr. Dave Smith: It's nice to know that Ontario's artists have an avenue of support through these unprecedented times, and that Ontarians also have an avenue to enjoy a concert in the comfort of their own home. The minister, however, also noted that Ontario Live is not only streaming music concerts, but it's also growing a collection of other sites and attractions for Ontarians to check out virtually.

Our government is committed to supporting some of our province's hardest-hit sectors through this pandemic. In fact, C.D. Howe Institute has stated that four of the seven hardest-hit industries were aligned with this ministry. Can the minister please shed some light on the future of Ontario Live and how it will continue to grow and support some of our hardest-hit sectors and businesses throughout our economy's reopening and our long-term recovery?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Obviously, this site is still in its infancy. However, it has garnered great success across the province and we have been able to attract 176 of our various heritage organizations, over 360 public libraries that we support and 166 community museums, and we've asked them to provide their digital content online. I was pleased visiting with my colleague from Leeds and Grenville, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to go to the Brockville community museum and see for myself that they are taking part in this.

In 2017, live performances in Ontario contributed more than \$1 billion to Ontario's economy and over 22,000 jobs, which is why our small investment of \$150,000 has been important to leverage at musictogether.ca, which is part of Ontario Live so that we can continue to support our Ontario artists so that they can not only make it big here at home but make it big around the world.

That's what we've done, Speaker. We're committed to making sure that all of those in the heritage, sports, tourism and culture industry sectors are supported at this time despite being hit first and hardest, and they will take longest to recover.

COMMERCIAL TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Ian Arthur: My question is to the Acting Premier. Landlords and tenants alike are frustrated with this government's failure to provide direct rent supports, and with the Premier's rather short-lived view that tough talk was enough to pay commercial rent.

In Kingston, business owners and landlords have dedicated weeks of staff time trying to navigate a poorly designed, broken program. Others have applied, only to not receive their log-in keys, and they cannot proceed with their applications until they get them. All across the province, businesses haven't been able to get the support they need, and they are facing eviction.

The program is an abject failure, but now the Premier wants to double down. Why did this government refuse to listen to business owners and advocates? Why does he think that tying an eviction ban to an already broken program is actually going to help any businesses in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to reply.

Hon. Steve Clark: I just can't understand what this official opposition stands for. They ask question after question after question about doing an eviction ban for businesses in the province. Many other provinces have joined our call. We've indicated that we were going to be

bringing in legislation that, if passed, would provide exactly what the Premier said in his press conference on June 3. Now the opposition, it appears—I don't know. They issued a press release a couple of days ago and say one thing; they said something else in the House today.

Pick a position. Make a decision on whether you're going to stand with business, as our government is, or whether you're not. Pick a lane.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Back to the Acting Premier: With all due respect, we have picked a lane, and that's to be on the side of small businesses across Ontario who need support right now.

The government's commercial eviction ban is too late and covers far too short a time frame. It should be a blanket ban that goes back to the very beginning of this crisis because landlords are simply backdating their eviction notices for the day before it's supposed to take effect. It does not help small businesses.

Businesses in my riding continue to feel the impact of COVID-19. It's going to last through the summer. They are losing the tourist season. The students are not coming back to Queen's, they are not coming back to St. Lawrence and they are not coming back to RMC. These businesses need ongoing supports, and this eviction ban will not be enough. It doesn't cover enough time.

Will the Premier redesign the commercial rent support program and ensure that businesses have the protection that they need to help reboot our economy permanently?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, I cannot for the life of me understand the NDP. Member after member after member has asked for a commercial eviction ban, just like the NDP government in British Columbia has implemented. Last week, Saskatchewan and Alberta—at the same time that our government announced it, more and more provincial and territorial governments are considering this.

The NDP keep asking for this. We finally give it to them, and now they're not satisfied. I just can't understand where the NDP stand on this issue.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Madonna Care Community in Orléans has suffered repeated tragedies throughout COVID-19. Staff shortages and a lack of PPE have led to a nightmare scenario. For months, family members called on the government to take concrete actions, but help didn't arrive for the 47 residents and two staff who lost their lives to COVID.

The owners of Madonna have fired a senior vice-president, and their CEO has resigned. Will the minister stand up and take her share of responsibility for the tragedy at Madonna and across Ontario?

1110

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for raising that issue. What is happening in many of our homes is really requiring an integrated approach.

I want to say that our homes are moving out of outbreak. We have a few homes where there's one staff or one resident—in some of the homes, there's actually no one in the home with COVID-19; it is a staff member who is self-isolating at home.

I'm very grateful to all the teams that came to help Madonna, the partners: Ontario Health, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, the Royal Ottawa hospital, the inspectors who have gone in. That outbreak is resolved.

So we are moving in the right direction. We are making progress.

Was there a legacy of neglect from the previous Liberal government and the NDP, who supported that government? Yes.

We have taken every measure and every tool, and we will continue to transition to a modern long-term care system.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: My supplementary is also for the Minister of Long-Term Care.

The Premier promised an iron ring around long-term-care facilities, and we know that never happened.

We called on the government to step in to take over Madonna Care Community in Orléans, and that never happened.

I asked the minister for the scorecards for the long-term-care facilities so we could provide the assistance that she requested in solving the long-term-care problem, and that never happened.

Ontarians are asking for a plan for long-term care to address a second wave, which we believe will happen.

Will the minister commit to releasing her plan for a second wave of COVID-19 in long-term care, or will that be yet another thing that simply doesn't happen?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for that forward-looking question. I think it behooves us all to be prepared, to anticipate, to be adaptable and vigilant. That's what we're doing through our testing strategy. This is what we're doing through the stabilization plans for our long-term-care homes and the staffing strategies that will be informed by the expert panel. These are all measures that will help our homes.

We've heard around the world that this is a global situation in long-term-care homes, and that there is concern about a second wave. We take that seriously and to heart, and measures are being taken to address this issue. I thank you for raising that. It's a very important point, and we will continue our work on this.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I know our government has been working with our municipal partners to ensure that we can keep Ontario's homeless population safe. As all members of this House know, the need for physical distancing has changed the ways our shelters provide services.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how our government has supported shelter providers throughout this pandemic?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Don Valley North for his incredible advocacy and his work in his riding. He does a tremendous job for his constituents every day.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, my ministry invested \$148 million into our communities through the social service relief fund. The funding is allowing our municipal service managers and our Indigenous program administrator to expand their services and their supports. This means securing hotels, increasing the pay of shelter workers, increasing funding that's available for rent banks and more. In fact, in the member's home city of Toronto, they're able to increase their rent bank by some \$2 million.

We have other supports, including the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative. The program is funded 100% by the province of Ontario. We're spending \$338 million this year—an increase from last year—to help people who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Thank you for the question.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the honourable minister for that response. It is reassuring to know that this government is continuing to support our most vulnerable through significant financial assistance. But we also know that it is taking more than money to help vulnerable Ontarians through these challenging times.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please further explain how this government is working to keep our homeless population safe?

Hon. Steve Clark: Our government implemented a risk assessment survey for all homeless shelters, and we created the Ontario Shelter System Response Table with local officials. This let us look at additional interventions as needed, based on the individual shelter needs. We've already used the survey to ship emergency PPE to six of our service managers. We'll continue to keep everyone safe, and we'll continue to keep working with the shelters.

Our government is also continuing to prioritize COVID testing for people in congregate living settings like homeless shelters. Circumstances are changing every day, and we need to continue to work to keep our most vulnerable safe. Thank you for the question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Not only are the Conservatives failing seniors in long-term care, but their choice to protect the profits of big corporations over the well-being of our seniors is truly hurting families.

In Hamilton, families are shocked with the news that continues to come out of the Rosslyn Retirement Home. Rat feces and black mould were found in the kitchen. Police were called to investigate after staff accidentally left a senior alone there overnight after an evacuation.

This week, we wrote to the Hamilton police, asking them to consider expanding their investigation into this horrific retirement home. Will your government support this call?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. This is a serious concern, and there's no excuse for what happened at that home. But I can assure you that the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority registrar has issued an order to revoke the licence of the Rosslyn retirement residence in Hamilton. After careful review and consideration of the information collected through inspections, complaints and reports from the staff and the public, the registrar did make this serious decision. I'm sure that there is more work that is going to be done, because we need to protect our most vulnerable citizens, and clearly, this did not happen.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: The horrendous conditions at this home show just how bad things were allowed to get, first under the Liberals and now under the Conservatives. Families have been raising concerns about this home and others for months now. The government should have revoked the licence of this home weeks ago instead of just standing by and letting things get worse.

Seniors built our province, and they deserve to retire and spend their final years in dignity, not spend it fighting for their lives in substandard care homes. Will the Deputy Premier commit today to taking profit out of seniors' care and commit to ensure this sort of thing never happens again?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can certainly agree with the member that the health and well-being of our seniors is of utmost priority to us. They did build the province, and they deserve to live their years in comfort and dignity and with at least the basic services that they need allowed for them, and more than that.

But I can assure the member that we are working with the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, the Ontario Retirement Communities Association and other key stakeholders to make sure that, with respect to our seniors in retirement homes and other congregate living spaces, they are able to be provided with the comfort and care that they absolutely deserve.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is for the Solicitor General. Correctional officers in Ontario perform a challenging but critically important job, working with a population that has complex needs, including at the South West Detention Centre near my riding.

Staff in correctional facilities can never fully predict what any given day will bring, which is why it is important

to ensure that they have the tools and resources they need to ensure our correctional facilities remain safe.

I was pleased to see that earlier this year, the Solicitor General announced an updated correctional foundational training program to better support incoming correctional officers. Can the Solicitor General share with this House how her ministry is building off of that announcement through further investments in front-line staff?

1120

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for the question. The years that you served in opposition working with the corrections institutions and our staff has really driven part of our desire to make sure that we do a better job.

As Solicitor General, I, along with my parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Cambridge, have heard from our front-line correctional staff about the challenges they face each and every day. As a result of these important conversations, I'm pleased to announce that our government is investing more than \$500 million over five years to deliver real change in correctional facilities across Ontario. This major investment will support the hiring of more than 500 new staff to address ongoing challenges within the correctional system. These new resources will also be used to modernize outdated infrastructure to support programming in our institutions.

By investing in people and infrastructure, we will create a better and safer environment.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, thank you, Solicitor General, for your response. This significant new financial investment is clearly an absolutely critical step in supporting Ontario's front-line correctional staff.

Back to the minister: Over the last few months, the government has been working to address the challenges presented by COVID-19, and I know corrections is no exception. Can the Solicitor General share an update with this House about how her ministry has responded to the COVID-19 health emergency, and whether those efforts are showing results?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It would be my pleasure. Since COVID-19 arrived in Ontario, we've taken swift action across Ontario's 25 adult correctional facilities, and we continue to take further action to keep our staff and those in our custody safe. Just some of the measures implemented include proactive testing of all inmates, as well as all newly admitted inmates, in conjunction with the local medical health units; temperature checks for all staff and visitors; working with our justice sector partners to proactively reduce the inmate population; as well as implement virtual courts, with near-universal uptake.

Correctional facilities, like so many other congregate-based sectors in Ontario, have not been immune to COVID. However, thanks to the proactive and ongoing work of the dedicated staff in each of Ontario's correctional facilities, we continue to see results in limiting the potential spread of this virus. This includes the Ontario Correctional Institute, where, I'm pleased to report, as early as this month, all active cases have been resolved.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is for the Acting Premier. Throughout this pandemic, the government has strengthened, not weakened, its ties with private long-term-care corporations. These private care corporations hired former government staffers to lobby the government on their behalf. This raises serious doubts as to whether this government is serious about fixing our long-term-care crisis.

That's why constituents like Mary from London North Centre support the opposition's plan for an impartial find-and-fix inquiry. She wrote to me saying, "It is unbelievable that our most vulnerable citizens have been experiencing these conditions for decades and nothing has been done! I want a full public inquiry."

Anything less is an insult to seniors. Anything less than a find-and-fix inquiry ought to be criminal.

My question is simple: Will the minister listen to Ontarians like Mary and commit to a public find-and-fix inquiry, or will they continue to take advice from the political insiders and lobbyists?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for your question. If we look at the Public Inquiries Act, it includes public commissions, and that's what we are committed to doing: making sure that we have transparency, public hearings and a public report. We are making sure that this is public, and we are in the process of getting this together for July.

I want to touch on some of the issues surrounding the redevelopment. If we look at, really, the past decade, since 2011, only 611 beds were built. That is a shame. That is one of the reasons why our ward beds and our long-term-care homes in areas with high density of population, like the Toronto area, were so badly hit—because of the density and the capacity in ward rooms. We know that that's part of the issue, and the staffing crisis.

These are areas that need to be addressed. We need to have an independent, non-partisan public commission. That is what we need.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Acting Premier: With all due respect, a commission is not impartial and it is not non-partisan.

Speaker, the Mount Hope Family Council wrote urgent letters to this government describing funding cuts, eroding resources, and management and staff doing their best but failing to meet needs. These letters were sent in November, December, March and April. From this minister: silence.

Not only is this government failing families in long-term care; the refusal to hire more full-time staff or pay PSWs a proper wage is making things worse for workers as well. Thelma, a registered nurse, wrote to me saying that long-term-care homes "should have to provide permanent work for PSWs.... Consistency in staffing builds a

better home and better relationships between residents and staff."

Sherry, another constituent, works in an Alzheimer's unit in long-term care and told me, "The staff-to-resident ratio is a joke."

Ontarians want to see health care heroes like PSWs treated fairly. When is this government going to listen to front-line workers and increase the number of full-time PSW positions—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The Minister of Long-Term Care to reply.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I'm glad that the member opposite asks this question, because that's exactly what our government was in the process of doing. We were addressing the staffing crisis that existed in long-term care after many years of neglect—many, many years of neglect—with an expert panel to provide information so we could develop a staffing strategy.

We introduced additional pay for our personal support workers in long-term care, who are truly, truly heroes. There is no doubt about that.

The good work that our government had begun through the Ministry of Long-Term Care—a new ministry that had only been in existence for a few short months before COVID-19 hit us.

I'm glad that you raised that question. The staffing issue was long neglected; the capacity issue, long neglected; and now our government is taking action on those. We will continue to transition to a modern 21st-century long-term-care system.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. As we all know, our airline and the aerospace sector that services them have been hit especially hard by the effects of COVID-19. It has had a terrible, devastating effect on the entire sector.

Ontario is lucky to be home to a \$7.1-billion aerospace sector that supports over 44,000 good-paying, quality jobs. Our aerospace sector generates \$6 billion in annual sales, and parts made in Ontario are in virtually every passenger plane in the world. We need this sector to stay strong.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister update the House on how our government is supporting Ontario's aerospace sector?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Thornhill for the question. Our government strongly believes in supporting strategic business sectors and their workers. We will always stand up for the manufacturing sector in Ontario, including aerospace, and help to manage the immediate impacts of COVID-19.

We are working closely with the Ontario Aerospace Council, Downsview Aerospace Innovation and Research, and the federal government to promote the industry at home and abroad. This includes important skills training and development in Ontario's world-leading aerospace education institutions, with over 40 degree and diploma programs in the field, and of course, the unprecedented

\$17-billion relief plan that helped people and businesses during this challenge.

Our government understands the challenges faced by the aerospace sector and many others. We will continue to work with our partners to protect and to strengthen aerospace jobs and investment.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Minister. It's very, very positive to see that we have a government that is relentless in its support for advanced manufacturing and for our thousands of aerospace sector workers. Our government's commitment to the aerospace sector will be crucial in maintaining confidence, protecting jobs and welcoming investments in the future.

Again to the minister: Mr. Speaker, can he update the House on steps Ontario is taking to support our aerospace sector in these unprecedented times?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Our government will always take a pro-jobs and pro-investment economic development approach. Actions taken by our government over the last 18 months have saved Ontario businesses over \$5 billion in 2019 and \$5.4 billion in 2020—things like reducing WSIB premiums by over \$2 billion and putting an investment allowance in place, saving business almost \$1 billion.

1130

Through our recovery plan, we are working closely with the aerospace and advanced manufacturing sectors to ensure that Ontario emerges stronger than ever. As Premier Ford has said, Ontario will continue to be the manufacturing and innovation engine of Canada. We look forward to continue working with our partners to build an even stronger aerospace sector here in Ontario for generations to come.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Today, people from all over Brampton and the Peel region are gathering to march against continued anti-Black racism at the Peel District School Board, and I'll be joining them as well. Students, families and faculty alike have been raising their concerns for years now. Public school board meetings have ended in harassment of parents and advocates, and Black students continue to be hurt by racist incidents, lowered expectations and cruel punishments.

Last week, the Minister of Education said he would wait another two weeks, after his investigator found that the board was not complying with his directives. Mr. Speaker, this isn't good enough. We need concrete action. When will the minister finally step up to the plate?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister has stepped up to the plate immediately. I know that there is agreement on all sides of the House that what we've seen and heard from the Peel District School Board is completely unacceptable. I know that all members are in

agreement on that, and I congratulate the member across, who will be showing that today in his hometown. It's very, very important.

The legislation, in fact, forces the minister to wait two weeks. It's not something that the minister can unilaterally do. As the member knows, there is a two-week waiting period after the report has been issued. The minister is doing that, and following the legislation. But let me assure the member, as he heads out to his community today, that this government is horrified by what it has seen, and we will make sure that that board stops and that we all can be proud of the Peel District School Board going forward.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question once again is for the Deputy Premier. It's clear we have a problem when teachers can get away with making racist and anti-Black comments in the classroom and get nothing more than a slap on the wrist. The government's own investigators suggested that they had no confidence in the Peel District School Board's willingness to tackle systemic racism. Parents, city councillors and organizations like the National Council of Canadian Muslims agree and are all calling for the resignation of the Peel director of education. And still the minister waits.

Mr. Speaker, why won't this government listen to the community and join with us in our fight to make our schools safer and more welcoming for all?

Hon. Paul Calandra: We have been seized with this right from the beginning, and not just in the Peel board. But since we're talking directly about the Peel board, and I know the member is going out later today, as he mentioned, the Minister of Education has taken direct action on this, as the member suggested in his question. We sent in an investigator. We have received a report.

By the terms of legislation passed by the members of this House, the government has a responsibility to wait two weeks to allow the board to respond. We are not going to break the law. We are going to follow the rules and follow the law. But let me assure this member that this minister, this government and I know all the members of this House will not stand for what we heard and what we've seen in that report. We will fix the Peel District School Board. We will make it a board that we can be proud of, whether they want it or not.

DEFERRED VOTES

SECURITY FROM TRESPASS AND PROTECTING FOOD SAFETY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'ENTRÉE SANS AUTORISATION ET SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA SALUBRITÉ DES ALIMENTS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply / *Projet de loi 156, Loi visant à protéger les fermes et les animaux d'élevage en Ontario contre les entrées sans autorisation et d'autres actes susceptibles de les déranger et à prévenir la contamination de l'approvisionnement alimentaire en Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply.

The bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1205.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The eyes are 68; the nays are 22.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING SMALL BUSINESS ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Mr. Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to amend the Commercial Tenancies Act / *Projet de loi 192, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location commerciale.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister like to explain his bill briefly?

Hon. Steve Clark: The Protecting Small Business Act amends the Commercial Tenancies Act to prohibit certain actions by landlords if the landlord is, or would be, eligible to receive assistance from the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance for small businesses program. However, the rules cease to apply if the landlord is approved to receive the assistance.

PETITIONS

SRI LANKAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario is home to a large and vibrant Sri Lankan community; and

“Whereas, since Sri Lankans arrived in Canada in the 1950s, Sri Lankan Canadians have made significant contributions ranging from civil service, university academia, medical and engineering professions, agricultural and agri-business, computer sciences, banking, arts and crafts and service industries. Their contribution to Canada and Ontario is immeasurable; and

“Whereas Aluth Avurudu or Puthandu or new year is the biggest of all celebratory festivals in the Sri Lankan community and it falls in April; and

“Whereas Sri Lankan Heritage Month will bring Canadians together to express their civic pride and to express their commitment to Canada by performing artistic activities, taking part in Canadian celebrations, sharing Canadian values and enriching the Canadian society with their practices of colourful heritage;

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

“To name April as Sri Lankan Heritage Month in Ontario.”

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a petition titled “Framework for Reopening the Economy.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians have been working relentlessly to adhere to physical distancing guidelines, limiting themselves to necessary travel and protecting their loved ones; and

“Whereas our health care professionals are working long hours in our long-term-care homes, doctors' offices, community care, and hospitals; and

“Whereas other essential workers, like grocery store clerks, farmers, meat and produce processors and transport workers keep our shelves stocked and food on the table; and

“Whereas the province has made significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 with decreasing infection and hospitalization rates, domestic production of personal protective equipment, and crucial financial investments in health and social services;

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

“That the government continues its methodical, cautious approach to reopen the economy so that people can get back to work, businesses can recover and people can regain a hopeful optimism for the future of this great province.”

I fully support the sentiments in this petition and affix my signature.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is entitled Equitable Broadband Access for all Ontario Businesses and Residents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas now more than ever, people across Ontario need reliable broadband to work, learn and connect with friends and family; and

“Whereas too many people in our province lack reliable Internet or cellular access—or don’t have any connectivity at all; and

“Whereas the digital divide has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically for rural and northern Ontarians;

“Whereas rural and northern Ontario businesses continue to face challenges accessing the 21st century digital economy which creates a serious economic disadvantage when following the advice of health officials during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

“Whereas as Ontario carefully reopens the economy, every region and every community must play a role in attracting jobs and investments to restore economic prosperity to the province; and

“Whereas investing in reliable broadband and cellular service creates greater opportunity for families, farmers and small business owners in rural and remote areas not only during the COVID-19 pandemic but after the pandemic ends;

“Whereas Ontario is investing \$150 million in a new program that, when leveraged with partner funding, has the potential to result in a total investment of \$500 million to improve broadband and cellular coverage service in underserved and unserved communities;

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

“Urge the federal Minister of Infrastructure, the federal Minister of Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development and the federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to provide Ontario with its fair share of funding through the Universal Broadband Fund and to commit additional funding to the province so that:

“(1) All of Ontario’s underserved and unserved communities can access reliable broadband service;

“(2) Ontario’s rural and northern communities can have the same opportunities for economic growth, recovery and participation in the 21st century digital economy as urban municipalities;

“(3) Ontarians in rural and northern communities can access government services, conduct business and connect with loved ones especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

I will affix my signature to the petition and hand it to the Clerk.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Parsa: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas now more than ever, people across Ontario need reliable broadband to work, learn and connect with friends and family; and

“Whereas too many people in our province lack reliable Internet or cellular access—or don’t have any connectivity at all; and

“Whereas the digital divide has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically for rural and northern Ontarians;

“Whereas rural and northern Ontario businesses continue to face challenges accessing the 21st century digital economy which creates a serious economic disadvantage when following the advice of health officials during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

“Whereas as Ontario carefully reopens the economy, every region and every community must play a role in attracting jobs and investments to restore economic prosperity to the province; and

“Whereas investing in reliable broadband and cellular service creates greater opportunity for families, farmers and small business owners in rural and remote areas not only during the COVID-19 pandemic but after the pandemic ends;

“Whereas Ontario is investing \$150 million in a new program that, when leveraged with partner funding, has the potential to result in a total investment of \$500 million to improve broadband and cellular coverage service in underserved and unserved communities;

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“(1) All of Ontario’s underserved and unserved communities can access reliable broadband service;

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“(2) Ontario’s rural and northern communities can have the same opportunities for economic growth, recovery and participation in the 21st century digital economy as urban municipalities; and

“(3) Ontarians in rural and northern communities can access government services, conduct business and connect with loved ones especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

I will add my name to this and hand it to a page.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Vincent Ke: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians have been working relentlessly to adhere to physical distancing guidelines, limiting themselves to necessary travel and protecting their loved ones; and

“Whereas our health care professionals are working long hours in our long-term-care homes, doctors’ offices, community care, and hospitals; and

“Whereas other essential workers such as grocery store clerks, farmers, meat and produce processors and transport

workers keep our shelves stocked and food on the table; and

“Whereas the province has made significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 with decreasing infection and hospitalization rates, domestic production of personal protective equipment, and crucial financial investments in health and social services;

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

“That the government continues its methodical, cautious approach to reopen the economy so that people can get back to work, businesses can recover and people can regain a hopeful optimism for the future of this great province.”

I will support this petition, I will sign it and give it to the page. Thank you.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

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

“Whereas the global competition to secure critical personal protective equipment and medical supplies is fierce; and

“Whereas in the face of a global shortage of medical equipment, Ontario-based companies have stepped up in a big way to produce these items in order to ensure our front-line workers are protected against COVID-19; and

“Whereas Ontario is making considerable progress in procuring critical supplies and equipment, while the global supply chain remains constrained; and

“Whereas nothing is more important than protecting the health and safety of patients and the workers caring for them, as well as our first responders;

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

“Proceed as expediently as possible to continue to ensure that patients, front-line health care workers and first responders have the critical equipment and supplies they need to protect them service during the COVID-19, so that:

“(1) Ontario continues to procure vital supplies and personal protective equipment through its traditional suppliers and donations, as well as working in collaboration with the federal government, other provinces, and Ontario’s manufacturers;

“(2) Maintaining Ontario’s same-day deliveries to hospitals, long-term-care and retirement homes and other facilities to support essential workers in all settings and ensuring supplies and equipment are expedited to those most in need;

“(3) The province continues to collectively explore how to overcome supply chain challenges, including through domestic production opportunities and the safe reprocessing of supplies.”

I’ll sign my name to it and send it down to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING TRANSIT FASTER ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

SUR LA CONSTRUCTION PLUS RAPIDE DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 17, 2020, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It’s my understanding that when we last debated this bill in the House the member for University–Rosedale had the floor. I’ll recognize again the member for University–Rosedale to continue her presentation.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker.

When I rose before, after the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation gave their speech, I gave some brief comments about what they had to say. Now, for the rest of the 53 minutes, I will speak about the bill itself and what was raised in committee, as well as some of the amendments that we introduced. The purpose of the amendments was to turn a bill, which is flawed, into a bill that could be a model for what transit planning and construction could look like in the GTHA and beyond.

Just to summarize, the stated purpose of this act is to speed up transit construction for four priority projects: the Yonge line extension, the Ontario Line, the Eglinton West extension, and the Scarborough subway extension to Sheppard.

The concern we have with the bill is that it allows Metrolinx and transit company contractors to run roughshod over neighbourhoods, businesses and their rights at the altar of fast transit construction. We have some concerns with that.

This is where we agree: There’s no question that the need for improving public transit in the GTHA and beyond is very real. We have some of the longest commutes in North America, averaging 48 minutes, and sometimes more if you’re a transit rider.

We also have a climate crisis presented to us, and making our transportation sector, which is one of the leading causes of GHG emissions in Ontario, more climate-friendly is critical. What we have learned with the COVID-19 pandemic is that if we do not prepare, if we are not proactive before a crisis hits, it’s very hard to catch up when the crisis is among us, and we are doing what we can simply to keep people alive. I fear that if we don’t start moving to making our transportation sector more sustainable, we will have a situation where the climate crisis hits us and we are simply not ready.

Then the additional piece that I want to raise is that there are huge transit inequities in the GTHA around who

gets transit and who doesn't. There's no question that wealthier areas in the GTHA have higher-order transit, better transit than some of the marginalized communities, some of the poorer neighbourhoods in the GTHA, including some parts of Scarborough, Etobicoke, Rexdale and beyond. It is important that we really think through what transit planning and transit construction we do to ensure everyone gets to benefit.

So we agree on that. The challenge I have is with the name of the bill itself, the Building Transit Faster Act—in order to improve people's commutes. The reason why I think it's important to just spend a little bit of time there is because if this government really wanted to improve people's commutes in the near term, help people who are waiting for that bus right now whom they say that they want to help, this would not be the best way to go about doing that.

If we wanted to do that, this government would move forward on investing in transit operations and maintenance during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, so that we can have immediate service improvements not just across the GTHA, but across Ontario. It is something the Ontario government used to do in the 1990s and before, when Toronto was known as having a world-class public transit system, but it hasn't happened since. When you starve maintenance and operations, you have a lot of issues that we're facing today: the subway delays and the overcrowding that the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation mentioned.

The overcrowding and the delays on our buses in some of these areas that stand to benefit from these new transit lines—that's not going to be fixed any time in this generation by this new bill and by these new transit projects. The best way to fix that is to fund, in your budget, transit operations and maintenance, so we can have immediate service improvements. The government is not doing it.

The second piece that is also important to mention is this issue around speeding up transit construction. We've got funding current routes—then we've got how do we build new transit lines more quickly, which this bill professes to do.

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So if we're looking at actually improving how quickly we build new transit lines, there are two ways to do that. Number one, you can fund transit construction; you actually put the money in to build the transit.

The challenge with this government is that when we look at the budgets and we look at the reports put out by the Financial Accountability Officer, the amount of money that's going into new transit expansion, new lines, has been cut by 40% over the next five years. So when we're talking about building new transit lines, the money is not showing the path to that Yonge line extension that so many members on our side and yours want. That's an issue.

The second primary reason why we do not build transit in the GTHA is because we change our minds. You know this; so do we. There are so many examples of transit lines that have been on the books, that all levels of government have supported, and then time goes by, years and years, a

new government gets in, a new mayor gets in, stuff happens—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Pouring cement in the line.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Oh, there's that, too. Thank you. A previous Conservative government.

And then, all of a sudden, these transit plans are delayed. Usually what happens is, the transit plans are on the books, but then there's no funding attached, and then eventually the transit plan gets completely scrapped. There are so many examples.

The relief line has been something that experts have been asking for for over 100 years. Eventually, the city of Toronto and the province got together and said, "We're going to actually fund an environmental assessment to get these projects shovel-ready." They spent millions of dollars in doing that environmental assessment, and it was this government that actually approved the environmental assessment—the Minister of the Environment at the time. That project was ready to go. Now it's gone.

It's the same with the Eglinton East LRT. During the election, when this government was running to be government, the Eglinton East LRT was part of your election platform. But once this government was elected, the Eglinton East LRT is no longer mentioned anymore, and there's no specific funding tied to the Eglinton East LRT extension, even though it's something that communities all across Scarborough have been asking for. It no longer exists.

It's the same with the lakeshore LRT.

It's the same with the Sheppard East LRT.

There are projects that we have been promised, but then plans change and there's no funding attached.

They are the two main reasons why we are not building transit faster in the GTHA. It has very little to do with construction. When I speak to transit experts around why we are delayed and I talk to them about how well we perform as a province, compared to other countries, on the speed at which we construct transit—and we're doing pretty good. We're not the best, but we're doing pretty good. It's actually not an issue. Once the shovels are in the ground, we're pretty good at getting it done. So I just wanted to put it into context.

Now I want to move to the bill itself.

We introduced 33 amendments to this bill in order to turn this flawed bill into something that could be a model for transit planning and construction moving forward. I want to identify some of the amendments that we introduced, to explain how we think this bill could be improved, in the hope that you will take these amendments and introduce them and make them part of the legislation.

The first one is to remove all parts of Bill 171 that would take away the right of a municipality to govern its own affairs. As the bill is currently written, the province can give permission to an international transit construction company to go in and say, "We're in a rush, so we're going to take over this TTC station. We're going to get the construction done. Sorry, city of Toronto. I know you need that Pape station to get people moving downtown and so on. Too bad, so sad. We're going to take it over so that we

can build transit quickly.” You’re allowed to do that under this bill. That’s a concern. The reason why it is a concern is that the city of Toronto has done a pretty good job at giving the Ontario government access to assets in order to build transit fairly quickly—this has been done with the extension to Vaughan, which was built, and then it’s also being done with the Eglinton Crosstown. It is not an issue. But the challenge is that when you take away the right for the city of Toronto to manage its own assets, what you do is, you take a hammer and you attack democracy a little bit.

The reason why I say that is because—the city of Toronto is the largest city in Canada. We have democratically elected officials whose job is to represent residents’ interests so that a balance can be made between the construction that needs to happen and residents’ very real need to use an intersection, to access their businesses so that they can make a living, to go to sleep at night in peace. There’s that balance there, and that balance is taken away for no good reason. That’s one of the amendments that we introduced. This Ford government chose to vote that down.

The second amendment that we chose to introduce—and this is something that is very near and dear to my heart, because it is a way for us to introduce equity and community benefits to local communities, and that is to require a community benefits agreement for each transit project. What that means is that we say to Metrolinx and the international consortium that will likely be building these projects, “Build away. However, when you build, you need to provide benefits to communities that are going to be suffering the pain of construction”—such as replace the park that is going to be destroyed or build a new park, so that people can benefit in the seven or eight years once the project is built. Or it could be: “We are going to hire locally, and we are going to hire from marginalized communities and get them access to good union construction jobs so that they can build a life here and get paid a good wage.” Currently, that’s not happening as quickly as it should, but you can include that in these transit agreements so we can bring about equity and build transit at the same time.

That’s actually never been more important than now, and the reason is because we have the COVID-19 pandemic. There are businesses and there are people who are struggling right now. Unemployment is very high. It is important that the money we invest in these transit projects, as much of it as possible, stays locally, within Ontario, within the GTHA, and goes into the hands of people who live here and work here. A community benefits agreement is a way to do that.

In committee, I did hear MPPs mention, “We don’t really need to do this because the minister has the direction to do that already,” or “That already exists.” Well, in our experience working with Metrolinx, community benefits agreements, even if they are promised, are not delivered. That has happened with the Davenport Diamond. Metrolinx promised artists’ murals and a walking space, and it was never delivered. It has also happened with the Eglinton Crosstown, where there is a community benefits

agreement in place. However, the consortium is far behind the equitable hiring targets it was supposed to meet—far behind. So there is a real need to put that commitment in legislation, in Bill 171, so we can build transit, make things more fair and address equity at the same time. The government chose to vote that amendment down.

An additional amendment that we introduced was an amendment to deal with the very real issue that communities are facing right now where they do not know the likely impacts of this construction. In committee, we had numerous people approach us and share in their testimony, “We don’t know where the stations are going to be. We don’t know what the route is going to look like. We have rig trucks on our street and we don’t know what they’re going to do. We have people walking around on our property taking soil samples; we don’t know why. We don’t know if our property is going to be evicted and we’re terrified because this is our community. We’ve built a life here. Our kids go to the local school. We don’t know what’s going on.”

This is not just a one-off example. Nearly every resident who lives near the Ontario Line was sharing these similar stories. Many of these residents represented people on their street who had agreed that this person would come and represent everyone, so many of these people were representing hundreds of their neighbours. The similarity in the stories that were told in committee reminds us that what Metrolinx is doing so far, what this Ontario government is doing so far when it comes to talking about the impacts or explaining what is going on, is not good enough.

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I want to quote a few examples. One is from Mr. Grigoriadis. He’s the owner of Phyllo Cafe. He says, “Right in front of my store right now”—this is from Hansard—there’s some “construction being done.” So Metrolinx is already there. “I understand; the city needs to do that. But in the end, some of the businesses do suffer.”

You’d be surprised how many people who came to committee said, right at the start of their presentation, “I’m pro-transit. I want transit.” This is not the typical NIMBY complaint that you hear when transit wants to come into your backyard. They all said it, and they all agreed to the relief line, so it’s hard to make that argument here.

“As you said, and as I said too, if this is the best thing for the city, I am all for it. But if this is directly going to impact me, I need to know. I need to know what’s going on with that. I’m hearing all these rumours, and I just want to know. Do I have to shut down my business? Do I have to move my business? I just want to know. That’s all.”

Then we had people like Claire Hastings. Claire is very active on this issue. She gave a description of what the open houses for the Ontario Line look like. The reason why she went to these open houses is because she wanted to know the likely impacts of construction as well. She described these open houses: “The open houses were less of an information-sharing exercise and more of an opportunity for Metrolinx to put up a bunch of already-presented information on bristol boards and have everybody walk

through and look at them. When we asked specific questions about how the alignment would impact our neighbourhoods, we had no answers.”

It seems like those Metrolinx open houses were a public relations exercise and nothing concrete was shared. As someone who also went to those Metrolinx open houses and asked questions to the communications staff who were there, I can say the same thing: The staff did not know what was going on. In fact, in some instances, I got the wrong information. I'd ask them, “What's your environmental assessment process?” And they'd say, “Well, we're going to do the full environmental assessment process.” Uh-uh; no, you're not. And they didn't even know that.

So we introduced an amendment to say that Metrolinx or the minister must publish a report describing the likely impacts of construction on an affected community—pretty fair. This government voted it down.

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes—not great. When you talk about collaboration—voting that kind of amendment down is not an example of collaboration.

An additional amendment we introduced was a community bill of rights during active construction. The reason why we introduced this amendment is because we wanted to make sure that all the residents who were going to be experiencing the pain of construction, and the benefit, for periods of up to 10 years—this is not a six-month thing—had some basic rights and protections from unreasonable disruptions and nuisances during construction. That includes some basic standards for what noise levels could exist and for how long, some basic standards on when businesses could be assured that they would have access to their business to continue to operate, some basic standards for vibration and quality of life.

The reason why we came up with this amendment—it's a few reasons; I'll give you two. One is that we reached out to the Eglinton BIAs that are experiencing the consequences of the Eglinton Crosstown right now, and we also reached out to TABIA, the association that represents small businesses across Toronto. This was their recommendation. They said, “Just give us some basic rights. We understand there's going to be construction. We want some basic rights. That seems reasonable to us.”

The second reason why is because Metrolinx, at this point, is operating in a way where people's quality of life is being severely impacted, and that's not right. All of the standards that we currently have that Metrolinx says that they're doing—the reality is very different from what is written on paper or said in a press release or a press announcement.

I want to read a statement that Sabina Sormova from the Lakeshore East Community Advisory Committee sent to me. Sabina lives right next to the regional express rail expansion that's happening right near the lake, just east of Toronto. They're expanding the tracks to make way for regional express rail. It's good, right? I think it's good. This is what she described construction is like:

“With no warning, deafening noise and earthquake-like vibrations woke residents and their children up to two

blocks far from the corridor. Metrolinx gave us zero notice and proceeded with this work for two weeks (between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.)” So that's two weeks, no sleep. “We had children calling 911 because they believed a train had hit their house while none of us knew what was happening, things were falling off shelves (due to sizable vibrations), dogs were barking in panic.” Metrolinx never addressed it—no let up; no notice. That is not the way to do construction.

So they're the two examples that I give for why we need a community bill of rights during construction: the experiences of these businesses along Eglinton and the direct experience of people who were dealing with construction being managed by Metrolinx right now, where Metrolinx is not letting people live at least a decent quality of life. The Ford government voted that down.

An additional amendment that we introduced was for the minister to establish a working group that would exist throughout active construction. The working group would consist of people from Metrolinx and the contractor as well as representatives from businesses in the community. They would meet maybe once a month—they would decide—to discuss and coordinate construction. The reason why that is important—it's a few reasons. This also came from the Eglinton BIAs, people who have dealt with construction for multiple years. They said that when there are conversations to coordinate work, it means that issues can be found and then they can be improved upon because people are talking.

I'll give you some examples. It is valuable for businesses to know when water on their road is going to be turned off. On Eglinton, they didn't know that. If there was a construction working group, they would know that.

It's valuable to know when electricity is going to be turned off. Once again, that was not clearly conveyed during the Eglinton Crosstown expansion.

It's valuable to know when parking is going to be taken away. Sometimes businesses can give a reasonable response and say, “Look, there's a big festival on that weekend. Could you not take away all our parking and our electricity and our water when we've got this big festival that's going to generate a lot of revenue? Contractor, do you think that you could maybe change your schedule around a little bit to accommodate for that?”

That is a value of a construction working group. Consequences can be mitigated if you have a conversation first. The Ford government voted that down.

The second amendment—actually, a lot of amendments later, we introduced an amendment which would require the minister and the construction company to coordinate with the city of Toronto and other municipalities affected by the construction to determine when utilities can be moved and whatnot. So in the bill itself, Bill 171, the Minister of Transportation talked about the need to allow transit companies to direct utilities to move their electricity or their sewage pipes or their water or their telecommunication lines whenever they want in order for transit to be built more quickly. At first blush, you would think, “Actually, that would make sense, because then we could

built transit more quickly.” At first read, that is what you would think. Then, when you look into it a little bit more and you talk to the city of Toronto and you say, “What do you think of this? What are your concerns? What do you like?” and so on, which is what I did, they had a different story. They’ve submitted an official response to Bill 171 which essentially says the same thing, and I encourage you to read it.

When you allow a transit company to jump to the head of the queue and move utilities whenever they want in order to build transit construction, you’ve got a problem, because it means that all the other competing needs that exist in a city, like making sure sewage pipes work so that you don’t have a flood in summer, get pushed backward. The reason why you coordinate it is so that you can decide as a region what needs to go first and second and third. The benefit of that is not just to make sure your lights turn on when you need to turn them on, your Internet works when you need your Internet to work, and you turn your tap on and the tap works; it’s also about saving money and minimizing the pain of construction.

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If a transit company comes forward and says, “We’re going to dig up this road because we’re in a rush”—they’re going to dig up the road; everyone suffers the pain; and then the city of Toronto has to come back maybe a year later to do all the utility work and changes that they would have ideally wanted to do at the same time as the transit construction project, but they weren’t ready yet. So you get more construction pain. You get more complaints. You get more businesses saying, “I can’t handle this construction anymore. I’m going bankrupt. I’m closing shop.”

That’s why we have a coordinating committee. The coordinating committee already exists. This bill seeks to take it away—not good. We introduced an amendment to keep it. This government voted it down—also not great. We tried, and we will continue to try.

This amendment that we introduced was to have a 24/7 line that you could call during active construction if there was an issue that came up in your neighbourhood. We’re not talking about a 24/7 line for you to call to say, “I’d really like the relief line, please.” I get it—maybe that’s your fear, that people would use it for advocacy reasons. No. This line would exist to deal with urgent concerns that people might have with construction. This is very valuable. It exists elsewhere, and it should exist here. This is a line you call if someone is shining a light into your window and you don’t know why and it’s related to construction. It’s the number you call if your water is shut down. It’s the number you call if there’s a truck blocking your driveway so you can’t get out in the morning. It’s the number you call if your electricity doesn’t work. You need a number to call, because construction causes significant inconvenience to people. Sometimes that pain could be mitigated a little bit if you have people you can call to find out why something is happening and maybe address it.

Miss Monique Taylor: And they turned it down.

Ms. Jessica Bell: They turned it down. That is correct. You can see a trend here. I can see a trend here too.

This is pretty cheap—\$28.5 billion. This is affecting the Ontario Line right now. But it’s not going to just affect the Ontario Line. It’s going to affect Scarborough. It’s going to affect the communities living along the Yonge line extension. It’s going to affect Eglinton West as well—these impacts.

When this government votes down these amendments, we will remember this, and we will go back and say, “Yes, we wanted you to have some basic rights during construction. However, this government decided you’re not worth it.” So just remember that.

A few other things that we had a lot of concerns with—we really had a lot. And it’s much easier to spend an hour talking after committee, I must say.

The additional one we had is that no project shall be procured using a public-private partnership. The reason why we introduced this motion is because Ontario’s track record at moving forward with using P3s to build transit projects and to build infrastructure in Ontario is not great—and you don’t have to take my word for it; you can take the Auditor General’s word for it. She did a value-for-money assessment of the major P3 projects in Ontario and found that we had spent \$8 billion more, for no clear benefit than if we had gone to using the public sector to build these infrastructure projects. That’s a lot of money. It’s money that we shouldn’t have spent.

What we also find is that when we look at transit projects that are built and invested in using the P3 model, we see a lot of issues. I’ll give you three examples. One is the rollout of Presto within the city of Toronto and beyond. Accenture, a US-French company—they run Presto. They make an undisclosed profit off each fare. It’s protected under commercial confidentiality, so we don’t know how much it is. But I do know all that money should have been invested back into transit. And they have delivered a product which is not meeting any of the standards that it needs to meet to be a good, working product. What that means is that you use Presto and it doesn’t work and then you get a \$425 fine—because a fare inspector finds you and asks why you didn’t use Presto, and you explain, “It doesn’t work,” and they say, “Too bad. There’s your fine.” That is what’s happening in the city of Toronto right now.

What’s even worse is that, because it’s not working, the city of Toronto has had to keep its public fare collection system and run both systems at the same time and pay millions for the price to do so. Two fare collection systems because Presto is still not working—it’s years late, the technology is already outdated, and the Auditor General is now saying it’s the most expensive fare collection system in the western world. That’s P3s for you.

It’s the same with the Eglinton Crosstown. The Minister of Transportation and the associate minister like to talk about how the reason why the Eglinton Crosstown was delayed is because some residents complained, and it took a long time for this tree to be taken down. No, no, no, that’s not the only reason why the Eglinton Crosstown was delayed. A big reason why the Eglinton Crosstown was delayed is because the international P3 consortium fell behind schedule and the contract that was written between

Metrolinx and Crosslinx Transit Solutions was not strong enough. So while the financial incentives you're giving this company to deliver the project on time—you're still giving them their financial incentives, but it's years late. So there might be some issues with the actual process of using a P3 model that's contributing to this delay as well, not just some tree.

The additional example is what's happening in Ottawa. It is safe to say that what is happening with Ottawa with the rollout of the LRT is a disaster. Of the 36 current trains on this new line, none were functioning as of May 13—none were functioning as of May 13. I don't think you could get worse than that. That is another example of P3s.

We introduced an amendment that would say that no project shall be procured via public-private partnerships. This government voted it down. The problem with voting that down, the problem with moving forward with P3 partnerships, is that the consequences of doing that will be on you and this government, and you will have to live with it. This government will have to live with it—voted it down.

One of the biggest issues that came up in committee was the government's decision to change the expropriations laws. The argument that the Ontario government gave for changing the expropriations laws was that the expropriations process slows down transit construction, because it means that people have a hearing of necessity, which is essentially their day in court. It's equivalent to roughly a day in court. That process can take up to five months and it can slow the transit construction process down, because that process needs to happen maybe before the project can proceed. That's the theory.

In practice, I have yet to see any information presented by this Ontario government that proves clearly that this expropriation process slows transit construction down. I would love to see it. But I have asked numerous times and I have not seen it yet. Because we have built transit construction projects in the GTHA—the Eglinton Crosstown, the extension to Vaughan—there should be examples that you can share. I encourage you to share them, because I have not seen that evidence yet.

The challenge with changing the expropriations process is that Ontario already has very powerful expropriations laws. You've got the laws already. You've got the power already. The thing with expropriation is it really touches upon this key concern that people have around government encroaching on their own territory. It really touches that balance around how much power governments have and how many rights people have. So that expropriations process has to be used very, very carefully and respectfully, particularly when you're dealing with people's homes.

We had people come to the committee hearings and talk about their concern with speeding up the expropriations process and taking away some of the rights people have. They talked about it in terms of how important their own home was. One person was Christopher Morris, and this is what had he to say: "When you approach someone to take their home, we have to remember that it's a home. It's not a structure; it's not in the way. It's a place where people

have memories, where they've raised their children, where they've evolved and become the people they are, and it is a very delicate, sensitive thing...." This is their life and their community. If a transit construction process is going to be taking that away from someone, then they deserve their day in court.

1350

We asked for you to go back and return to the traditional expropriations process that currently exists on Ontario's books—a strong expropriations process. This government chose to vote that down.

An additional amendment that we introduced was for Bill 171 to respect any decision that has been made by municipalities; specifically, decisions must be consistent with agreements with municipalities. The reason why we introduced this amendment is because right now the Ontario government is moving forward with signing multi-year, billion-dollar contracts with international companies to build the Ontario Line—it seems like that's the one they're moving forward with first. In those contracts are conditions and agreements that counter the agreements that they have made with the city of Toronto.

I want to give you a few examples or some history. The city of Toronto agreed to support the four transit priority projects that this government has moved forward on—they have agreed. I was there in the city council meetings. They agreed, but they had some conditions for their support. Those conditions included that they didn't have to pay a cent. They got that. They didn't have to give over the rest of the subway system to you all, which is what the Ontario government originally wanted. They got that. We were all happy; we declared that as a victory.

And then they had additional ones. They said, "We want a TTC fare. We don't want what's happening with the Union Pearson Express in the beginning, where you had to pay 27 bucks to get on a train because you want to have zero operating subsidy—uh-uh-uh. We want a TTC fare so that this new line that everyone is paying for is affordable for everyone as well."

They wanted the TTC to control operations and maintenance. The reason why they want, I want, and we want the control of operations and maintenance to stay with the TTC is because the TTC has had over 100 years' experience operating and maintaining the TTC. They know how it works. They do a good job. It is cost-effective. In fact, the TTC is the most efficient transit system in North America. It does more than any other transit system in terms of dollars spent per rider than every single transit system in North America, including New York City, even though it doesn't have the level of ridership. The TTC is already doing a good job of operations and maintenance, and they're doing it in an efficient way. The city knows that, the TTC knows that, and we know that. We said, "A condition for the city's support is for you to also say yes to that."

But then what do you go do? You start introducing requests for proposals where you're going to be contracting out operations and maintenance and giving it to a private company. And it's the Toronto Star that has to find

that out; you're not even telling us. I don't even know if you told the city of Toronto. We had to find that out from the Toronto Star. What this government is saying they're going to do with these transit projects, they are not doing in practice.

So we introduced an amendment to say, "We want you to honour your word. Put in legislation that you are going to respect the city of Toronto's requests to you in condition for their support for these four transit priority projects." You voted it down, which says a lot.

An additional amendment that we introduced—this bill, Bill 171, does what a lot of your other bills do, which is to block people from suing the crown, Metrolinx or the construction contractor for actions that are taken as part of this bill. This is very typical. You put this in a lot of legislation now.

What that means is if a contractor or a construction company does some damage to a road or does some damage to a home or does some damage to a business, then they cannot go to the courts to sue. I don't think that's very fair. The reason why I don't think that's fair is because the courts are one of the four pillars of our society that hold up democracy. Limiting people's access to use the courts limits our democratic rights. That's a concern.

Secondly, the reason why it is a concern is because when you give Metrolinx and international transit companies a get-out-of-jail-free card, where they're allowed to construct very quickly, don't worry about the consequences and it makes them immune to lawsuits, they're going to take less care than they typically would if they knew that someone could go to court if they do something wrong. It's about care. You're setting yourself up for a situation where there are going to be problems in the future.

We said that we would like that taken out so that people can retain the right to sue Metrolinx, the crown or a construction contractor for specified actions. This government voted it down.

My experience, following transit over the last while, is that I have noticed that when a transit project is announced at a press conference, train station, city council, whatever—I've been to a lot of them; I've seen a lot of them—people are very excited. They put on their fancy clothes, show their map and say, "This project is going to be the cheapest project in the world. We're going to get more, and it's going to be cheaper." That happens time and time again. Fair enough.

The challenge is that often when the announcement happens, the level of design work done for that transit project is at the very early stages. It's often at the conceptual stages, so we know very little about what will happen or how much it will actually cost because engineers haven't gone in and done the soil samples. They haven't worked out exactly where the stations are going to be, whether it's going to be above ground or below ground, whether there's going to be some underground creek that you would encounter or maybe you have to go under the 401, so you have to go deeper for vibration issues. You haven't worked all those details out.

Then what happens is that when you start working out those details and you go to 5% design and then 15% design and then you put it out for bid, the more detail you get, the cost changes. We're seeing this with numerous transit projects. We've seen this with the Eglinton Crosstown. Originally, the Eglinton Crosstown in 2012 was going to be \$4.5 billion—pretty good. However, now it is \$12.58 billion, and the costs keep going up. That's three times the difference. That's a lot of money.

What we asked for is for an amendment that would require the minister or Metrolinx to publish a project's budget before signing a contract—so before a 10-year or a 30-year contract is signed, if you're looking at moving in operations and maintenance as you're looking at doing, the public knows how much this government is looking at spending in order to build this project. It's fair. It's about transparency. This government voted that down.

We also introduced a motion that would require public notification and consultation for any proposed changes to a transit project. What this means is, if we find out, for instance, that the Ontario government has decided they can only afford one section of the Ontario Line, and they can't afford the additional sections, like the area underneath King Street going to Ontario Place—very expensive—or the section going up into Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park, then the public needs to know about it and then there is a period of consultation before that decision is finalized. That seems fair.

The reason why we also introduced that, besides from fairness reasons, is because this government already has a history of cancelling transit projects or changing transit projects once they've already been announced. We've seen that with the Hamilton LRT. We've seen that with the elimination of the Mississauga loop from the Hurontario line. We've seen that with the relief line. It seems fair to have an amendment that you are transparent about what you're building, and if there are any changes, you make that transparent as well. This government voted that down.

We introduced a lot, but the final one that I want to mention here is about one of the biggest issues that the public is concerned about, especially along the Ontario Line route, which is the speeding up of the environmental assessment process.

1400

To be clear, the environmental assessment process that is used for transit projects is already an environmental assessment process on steroids. It's much quicker than the traditional environmental assessment process that you'd use for other projects. I guess the thinking behind it is that these projects are important so we should speed it up.

We already have a very efficient environmental assessment process. This government has decided that it's not efficient enough. Very concernedly, what is being done, through regulation, is to allow for early works to happen before the TPAP, the transit environmental assessment process, is complete.

This is a concern because "early works" is not defined. What that means is that a contractor could go in and start building a station or building a section of the route and the

environmental assessment process is not done. So what that means is that you are already committing yourself to a route and you don't exactly know what you're going to build yet, or you haven't done the environmental assessment process yet so you don't know the full costs of doing that.

The reason why that is a concern is that when you do the environmental assessment process—the full environmental assessment process—you find out a whole lot of information that you wouldn't when you're at the early design phase, like I mentioned. You might find that the above ground route that you want to take for the Ontario Line is too expensive, but you haven't done the environmental assessment process yet to work that out. But you're still moving forward on it, because you're allowing yourself to do early works beforehand. That's a concern.

Paula Fletcher, the city councillor for that area, said it quite well when she said, "There is a great saying in construction: Measure twice and cut once." The challenge with this government is that what you are looking at doing is measuring and cutting at the same time. And you're going to find problems. You're going to find problems when you use that approach. I don't recommend it. There is a reason why we have an environmental assessment process. It's not just to placate the public and listen to them; it's also to make sure you're going on the right path and you're building transit right.

We introduced an amendment to return the TPAP, the transit environmental assessment process, back into these four priority projects. The Ford government voted that down. You get to live with that.

In conclusion, Bill 171 says it aims to build transit. However, you're doing that by taking away Ontarians' rights and you're doing that by making it harder for businesses and residents and cities to live with the pain of construction. You're eradicating protections for residents. You're making it easier to expropriate homes. You're removing their ability to have their day in court. And you're insulating Metrolinx and the government from civil action. That will empower Metrolinx and the company that you choose to go with to engage in a pattern of behaviour which will have long-term consequences on residents and businesses. I don't think that's the right way to go.

We need to build transit; there's no question. We are pro-transit, and we will support a lot of the transit lines that you are moving forward with. The challenge is that you need to make sure that transit construction is done right.

My request to you is that you move forward with Bill 171 and turn it into a model bill for transit planning and construction. That means community benefits agreements so that communities can benefit from construction and there is local and equitable hiring. It means being transparent about impacts so local businesses and residents, and future residents and businesses, know what they're getting into. So if someone is looking at buying a house in the area, they know what they're getting into; if someone is looking at investing in a business in the area or starting a business in the area, they know what they're getting into—

the likely impacts. You need to set basic rights for residents, such as a limit on excessive and nuisance noise and pollution.

This government needs to treat municipalities as the democratically elected cities that they are by respecting their jurisdictional territory and working truly with them as partners, and not as people to toss aside when it's no longer convenient for you.

This government needs to use the TTC's experience in delivering, operating and maintaining transit projects because they have a track record of getting it right, a 100-year track record of getting it right, and ignoring that expertise and wanting to create a parallel, privatized maintenance and operating system is only going to cost us more. It's not a good way to go.

You need to treat residents with respect and give them a seat at the table, giving them information around what is happening with construction, before and during, and a say around what construction could look like, within reason.

This government needs to respect people's right to a hearing of necessity during expropriations, because the government is taking away people's homes. You can't play with that. You can't ignore that. You need to respect people because you are taking away people's homes.

It is important. We can't just build transit; we also have to build it right. I'm encouraging you to look at these amendments that we introduced in committee and introduce them into this bill or moving forward so that we can have a model of how transit construction should be done in this city.

That is all I have time to say. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll now invite questions to the member for University–Rosedale. I'll first recognize the member for Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: I'd like to thank the member from University–Rosedale for her comments on Bill 171. I think we can agree on a couple of things. I think we can agree that building transit is important. We want to see that happen in the city of Toronto and in our great province. I've said this many times in the House: I come from a neighbourhood where two subway lines just die in our neighbourhood. I'm talking about Finch station and Sheppard station. There's been many a time I've taken that subway north from Sheppard just to get a spot on a train going southbound during rush hour because it's so packed, and I'm not even talking about a seat—just to squeeze my way in through those doors.

So here's my ask to the member opposite, and I hope you'll join me in this. Getting transit built should not be a partisan issue. I hope you believe that as well, and I think you do. If we want to move these projects forward, we need help from the feds, so I'm calling on the opposition to please call Jagmeet Singh. Let's get him to lobby the Prime Minister. Let's get the feds on board with this plan to get transit built. Will you help us and commit to speaking to Jagmeet Singh in Ottawa?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that question, member from Willowdale.

This is what I can say: When you want to build transit, you need to make sure that all levels of government are in support and communities are in support—because it's easy to plan transit, it's easy to have a press conference, but it's much harder to build. And when you want 40% support from the federal government and 20% support from the city of Toronto, you need to include them in the planning process and not just come out, go to some station, make an announcement and say, "We're doing away with all those plans that you've just spent years and millions of dollars spending money on and we're going to start again."

When you do that without even communicating with the federal government, or the Minister of Transportation or the city of Toronto, then you get the situation that you're in right now, which is that you are left holding the bag. It is on you. So my return question to you is—next time, plan differently.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from University–Rosedale for her very thorough and informative comments on transit.

Through you, Speaker, to the member from Willowdale: We've given 33 examples of our willingness to work with you and this ruling party—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I hesitate to interrupt the member, but this isn't a general free-for-all debate. Your question is supposed to be to the member for University–Rosedale, not a comment to the member for Willowdale.

Once again, I'll recognize the member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: To the member from University–Rosedale: Voting down 33 amendments is nothing short of severe. It shows a ruling party deeply unwilling to work as a functioning Parliament. It's not just uncollaborative; it just seems much more than that. Dose Bill 171 remind you of other legislation where this government has tried to put itself above the reach of the courts?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that leading question. I appreciate it.

Yes, it does remind me of other examples where the Ontario government has limited people's access to use the courts to address wrongs. Some examples that come to mind include using the "notwithstanding" clause to change the city of Toronto's election, during the middle of an election, reducing the number of seats from 47 to 25. That's not right. That's anti-democratic.

1410

An additional example that comes to mind is also limiting people's access to address wrongs when there are numerous green energy contracts that were cancelled—to move towards greening our energy grid. This government likes to give the example: "Oh, it's the green energy—that's the reason why our electricity grid is more expensive." You know it's not that simple. You know it's not that simple, and these businesses were working very hard to green our energy grid in this riding.

So there are two examples that I have in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Mr. Speaker, through you: I'd like to ask the member across from University–Rosedale a question. I agree with you about the Presto card; it's a massive disaster here in the province. But Ontario's track record on P3s overall is excellent, based on a 2018 third-party independent report. Some 95% of Ontario P3s are completed on budget and 70% on time, above traditional projects. Why are you so against P3s?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for that question.

I have heard that report before. I'm going by my experience with large transit projects that have taken place in Ontario over the last 10 years. The three biggest examples that I follow closely are the Ottawa LRT, the Eglinton Crosstown and the Presto. All of them had serious flaws attached with them during the process—the costs and the final outcome. That is why we are very concerned with the use of the P3 model for transit projects.

In addition, I have a lot of respect for the Auditor General's work. She did a very thorough job of investigating all the major infrastructure projects that were delivered using the P3 model in Ontario. That's a very rigorous study. She found, very clearly, that we wasted \$8 billion using the P3 model when we could have used the public sector, had a better product, saved money and had more accountability at the same time.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank our critic the MPP for University–Rosedale for her very thorough debate. I listened to it this morning, and again this afternoon.

I have a question—and it was said very briefly, and most of the Toronto members laughed. Everybody knew what it was. It's this comment around pouring cement in the line. As someone from Sudbury, I have no idea what that means. I don't know the history of it, but I think it has a reference to wasting government money. Could you just expand on it so that I and other people in Ontario understand what happened?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Sudbury for raising that giggle. The reason why we giggle is because former Premier Mike Harris made a decision over 20 years ago to pour cement into the Eglinton subway that was being built at that time. If Mike Harris didn't pour in the cement and stopped construction on the Eglinton subway, we could have had that project over a decade ago. That's why we giggle—because it's an example of the flip-flopping that happens with transit planning, which the Ontario government continues to this day: cancelling the relief line, taking us back to the drawing board and starting again. It's a giggle, but also has some shards of sadness and pain in it as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I was listening intently to your—it was about 54 minutes that you were speaking in total there. One thing that really stuck me was when you talked about the motion that you introduced to hire local. In my riding, we have been severely affected by COVID-19 and we

have a number of construction companies that are excellent at building transit. Why don't you want people from Peterborough–Kawartha working on this project?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for University–Rosedale to reply.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Peterborough for that question. I'm going to change the question a little bit. We are in support of transit construction. We are in support of building new transit lines. What we are concerned about is building new transit lines that have gone through a very limited planning process and don't have the support of the community. That's what we're concerned about.

We are fully in support of moving forward with transit construction that hires locally and that uses contractors within Ontario and builds the trains within Ontario, as well. That's something we fully support. I look forward to working with you to make sure that any new transit construction project that we build ensures that the money is spent here and we don't go with some French or German international construction company, which is what you're considering doing, to build transit when that money should be spent here in ridings like yours.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much for that wonderful presentation, which was so interesting.

To my colleague from University–Rosedale, a quick question: You've laid out some nightmare scenarios. What do you think the worst nightmare might look like for the government if it doesn't follow your amendments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: There are many ways that this could go badly. Some examples that come to mind include—the Ontario government abandons the projects because the federal government doesn't commit its fair share, because you didn't do the due diligence in advance. Another example includes building a transit line where the cost of operating that line is so prohibitive that it becomes too expensive. The example I like to use is the Sheppard line, where it costs \$10 to subsidize a rider on that line. So we want to choose lines where it's efficient to run the line and operate the line and not just build it. I wouldn't—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: It is an honour to stand here before you and in front of our esteemed colleagues today to discuss the proposed legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act, and how, if passed, it will allow us to deliver the types of integrated rapid transit networks that the greater Toronto area so desperately needs and rightly deserves.

In the GTA today, years of political squabbling over transit planning have left the province's transportation network severely neglected. More and more commuters are forced to take their car to work each day because of a lack of reliable alternatives. Mr. Speaker, today's economy and population growth over the last decades has been framed as a success story, and it is. But it has also exposed the weakness in the region's transit and transportation

networks. It's time we take bold action to improve transit in Toronto. I'm sure that we all can agree that aging infrastructure and an overcrowded and outdated transit network continue to increase the level of traffic and congestion on Toronto's roads and highways.

Our government was elected with a mandate to grow our economy in a way that protects what matters most and makes life easier for the people of Ontario. And as we grapple with the impacts of COVID-19, it's more important than ever that we get it right, because the way we have done things in the past will not be the way we do things in the future.

Ontario's previous government has left us unequipped with the options we need to connect people to local jobs and to help students get to school. The existing transit options are overburdened, unreliable and too infrequent to provide viable, long-term solutions. Nobody should have to be stressed or angry because of their experiences taking public transit to work each day. We need a safe and reliable transit network that helps people through seamless connections to large city centres and economic hubs.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Transportation and the Premier, we are bringing an end to the years of neglect of this region's transit network and ushering in a new era of bold investment in Ontario's transportation network. Our government is committed to building better transit faster as we take a collaboration-first approach in developing a public transit system that serves the needs of the people. This is a commitment we take very seriously.

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Our historic plan for transit in this region will connect people and communities in ways that will ensure our prosperity. Our commitment to delivering four new transit lines will increase reliability and provide a range of new options for commuters in the region. Our proposed legislation, if passed, will ensure we can deliver these priority projects better and faster. From Richmond Hill Centre to Ontario Place, our plan will get people where they need to go faster.

Our recent preliminary agreement with the city of Toronto and the region of York formalizes our partnership and establishes a framework under which we'll achieve our shared goals. This is a significant milestone in our plan to get Ontario moving. And now, endorsed by the province, the city of Toronto and York region, our plan is the first one put forward in over a generation that is realistic, attainable and, most importantly, deliverable.

Building more convenient and low-stress alternatives to driving means more people will choose to take transit to work every day. Our plan for subway expansion will give thousands of people more direct access to rapid transit near their homes and workplaces. This will vastly improve their quality of life.

We are confident that the federal government will come to the table with a formal commitment to fund their 40% share of the largest subway expansion in the region's history. These projects are of great importance not just for Toronto, but for all of Ontario and Canada. We continue to invite the federal government to join us as full partners

as we take these next steps to deliver our historic plan for transit expansion in the GTA.

In the past, we have accomplished so much when all levels of government have come together. This is what the people of Ontario expect: all levels of government working together to get new transit and subways built. We are confident that the federal government shares our commitment to relieving Toronto's overcrowded transit system and will join us in helping commuters, because massive projects like this need all three levels of government at the table.

With the endorsement of our plan by the city of Toronto and the region of York, we have a chance to build a world-class rapid transit system that benefits all transit riders and taxpayers. Our four priority transit projects will strengthen the GTA's transit network and prepare us for the region's growth and prosperity in the years to come.

We have a plan that will transform the region and address Canada's most expensive and productivity-killing congestion. We are ready to work with Ottawa as full partners to get shovels in the ground as we move forward with the largest transit expansion in Canadian history. Now is the time for Ottawa to join us at the table and fund its fair share of these nationally significant transit projects, because what's good for Ontario is good for Canada.

We have set a bold and ambitious plan for transit because this is what is needed—swift action to improve public transportation in Toronto. Inaction will jeopardize the region's future and would only be kicking the can down the road, as an investment in transit is desperately needed.

By challenging the status quo, our plans take proactive steps to streamline and speed up the construction of our priority transit projects so that we don't have to wait for another generation to enjoy the benefits of a truly integrated rapid transit network.

As you have heard, the proposed Building Transit Faster Act, if passed, will remove roadblocks that have held up projects in the past, while safeguarding Ontario's high safety and environmental standards.

This legislation, if passed, and supporting regulatory changes will address key challenges:

- the potential for adjacent construction to create safety concerns and delays;
- no established process for municipal permits when collaborative efforts are unsuccessful;
- no streamlined process to enter lands to address encroachments or to conduct due diligence work;
- the need for a structured, consistent process for engaging and coordinating work with utilities; and
- the timely access to the land needed to construct transit infrastructure.

Complementary updates to environmental assessment regulations on the priority projects would accommodate more innovation without relaxing any environmental protections. This is not a relaxation of Ontario's environmental protections. We are only improving the speed and efficiency of the process. We can no longer afford to delay building better transit faster, and must act now if we are to

improve the quality of life for everyone that lives in the GTA today and for those who choose to join us in the future.

It's time to put a foot on the gas and get this vital work done. We should know that if someone is building along our planned transit corridors, we can prevent delays by requiring these projects to work in coordination with the development of our priority projects. We have also signed a memorandum of understanding with our utility partners—Toronto Hydro, Hydro One and Enbridge—to make sure these utilities do relocations within prescribed time frames so that we can build faster.

Under the proposed plan, we will modernize the province's authority to assemble project lands and minimize the prospect for delays in this process, while still treating landowners fairly. Our proposed changes will save years in delivering our priority projects. Had these measures been in place, businesses and residents along the Eglinton Crosstown line would be enjoying the benefits of improved transit today, instead of having to suffer through years of construction delays.

I had the privilege of being on the Standing Committee on Social Policy for this legislation to hear from stakeholders, associations, business owners and residents about their thoughts on our proposed plans. Overwhelmingly, we heard that people want better transit. They want to build better transit that serves the needs of the region today and into the future, but they don't just want us to build better transit faster; they want us to get it right.

A speedy construction process cannot trump sound planning principles and frequent community engagement and consultation—and we certainly agree. That's why we are focused on removing roadblocks that cause delays in transit infrastructure, construction process and choosing the right transit projects that get people where they need to go faster.

We also heard that people want transit expansion that is conscious of the impacts of construction on the surrounding neighbourhoods. While transit infrastructure projects of this scale will inevitably cause disruption, we'll ensure Metrolinx takes every step possible to mitigate the impacts of construction on the surrounding businesses and communities. When they are in these neighbourhoods, we'll make sure they are taking steps to be a good neighbour.

Many of the people who live and work along transit corridors also told us how important community consultation and engagement is for them as we take these next steps.

1430

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work closely with Metrolinx and the city of Toronto to ensure that there are frequent opportunities to provide feedback, because community engagement and consultation is a vital part of Metrolinx's planning and design process. Community information officers will be established to provide on-the-ground support for all planned and ongoing transit projects. Metrolinx will continue to explore new ways to engage and consult residents, even during the COVID-19 time, during this challenging time.

Our government's proposed legislation and plans for transit expansion enjoy broad support from industry leaders and stakeholders, from developers to the construction industries, economic associations and more. They know what is at stake and that we cannot afford to delay transit expansion any longer. They worry residents are becoming cynical about the pace of meaningful transit infrastructure development within a reasonable time frame. We agree with these concerns. Increasing the speed and reducing the cost of delivering these essential transit projects will meaningfully contribute to these communities and the province's economy. They believe in these projects and the need to deliver them quickly so that everyone can enjoy the economic benefits they will bring to our quality of life.

We can no longer afford to undertake new transit developments with a business-as-usual attitude. Years of inaction demand that we can use innovative approaches to solve the challenges that lay ahead. If we are looking to innovate, we need to build more transit stations. We need to be creating an environment that encourages the development of whole communities.

As part of our plan, our government is committed to building transit-oriented communities that will provide reliable connections and complete travel experiences faster, to support healthy and sustainable communities. By partnering with industry leaders to build higher-density, mixed-use developments connected to transit stations, we'll create more dynamic, livable communities. That is just smart urban planning.

With the million-plus expected to move into the GTA in the next decade, these types of whole communities will mean less congestion and less time wasted idling in traffic, resulting in fewer greenhouse gases. This is one of the ways we can cut down on billions in lost productivity costs every year. It takes great transit to make a great city. Transit-oriented communities will connect more people's homes and jobs to transit and reduce congestion and costs on the flow of goods along with our transit transportation network.

I want to thank my colleague the Associate Minister of Transportation for her leadership in the development of her strategy for transit-oriented communities. Transit-oriented communities are just one element of our plan to improve the transportation network and connect people to places right across Ontario. The Building Transit Faster Act, if passed, will help us get shovels in the ground faster and deliver real relief to families so they can take transit where they need to go.

Toronto's lack of reliable access to transit has created barriers for communities and businesses for far too long. We are making a smart, long-term investment that addresses congestion and gives commuters the options they need to get to their destinations faster. Every day I take pride in knowing that we are building a smart, fiscally sustainable government that puts the people at the centre of everything we do.

I'm grateful to have a chance to serve as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation as our government takes the steps towards the most significant transit

expansion in Canada's history. I'm also very proud to represent the residents of Scarborough–Rouge Park and the people of Ontario. Together, we'll build a transportation network that better serves families, commuters and businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm now going to ask the members if they have questions for the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park.

The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park for his comments during the debate.

There's something I'm trying to understand—because we talked about doing things better. My understanding is that prior to this election, there were previous subway plans in place for Toronto already. In my history with construction, you have environmental assessments, you have engineering drawings, you have safety risk assessments—all these are things that would take time, effort and money—and those have been cancelled. So I'm trying to wrap my head around the idea that it will be quicker and more cost-effective to throw away all the work and money we've put forward already and start from scratch. Can you help me understand how that works?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Rouge Park to reply.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks for the question from the member opposite, from Sudbury.

At this time, we are focused on the four priority subway projects: the Scarborough subway extension, the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, the Yonge North subway extension, and the Ontario Line. The tools outlined in this legislation are designed to get shovels in the ground on time and on budget, because we are in a pivotal moment in history, where all three levels of government agree on one single, unified plan: to get subways built. It is clear that the time is now to build better transit. This marks the first step in moving forward with building these four priority projects, and this bill, if passed, will speed up the process. And that doesn't mean relaxing any environmental assessment or any other process. We just have a streamlined process.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I was listening intently to the speech made by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation. It was very interesting and informative. I just wanted to follow up on a few things and maybe get a bit further explanation from the member.

My understanding is that the federal government committed at least 40% funding to our priority subway projects during the 2019 campaign, but this hasn't really yet translated to money. Could the member please tell us why it's so important that we have the federal government at the table in order to get these projects built?

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

Massive projects like this need all three levels of government at the table. As I mentioned in the previous

answer, we are in a historic moment when it comes to transit projects. This is not just the biggest transportation project in the province of Ontario but, in fact, in Canadian history. So, to make these transit projects possible, we need the federal government to be at the table and provide their fair share of 40%. We are all confident that the federal government will come with its 40%, with the province of Ontario and with the city of Toronto, to make these four priority projects possible.

Again, as I mentioned, I have to thank the Minister of Transportation and the Premier for their leadership in bringing this historic moment to reality. We are here right now—and all people want to get subways built. They are not here to complain about who builds it. They just want to build the subways.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park.

The question I have is around the city of Toronto's requests to the Ontario government in return for its support for these four priority transit projects, including ensuring a TTC level fare and ensuring that operations and maintenance stay under the city of Toronto's control. Is this government going to keep operations and maintenance under the city's control for these four priority projects?

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

As I mentioned, the last fall, the city of Toronto council endorsed our subway plan with an overwhelming vote of 22 to three. In addition, only one member of the council voted against the motion to accelerate the delivery of transit expansion in Toronto.

And this bill we are discussing today—we are discussing about streamlining the process to build the transit faster. The subway plan is massive, is bold, and our legislation aims to help achieve just that plan, to speed up the process, and that's why we are asking all the members of this Legislature to support this bill, so that we can get the transit faster.

Again, as I mentioned, all three levels of governments are in one agreement to get this done—and that's exactly what we are expecting from our members from both sides. Because I hear every week, every month, people want to get subways built. It doesn't matter who builds it; they just want to get it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the terrific member from Scarborough–Rouge Park: I listened very intently to what you had to say with regard to this very special and very specific bill, Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act.

The NDP agree—and that's a novel point. They agree that we do need better public transit, yet they stand in opposition to this legislation. Could the member, could you, sir, tell us why the measures introduced in this bill are necessary to make real progress on transit infrastructure in the GTA?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, member, for your question and for your hard work for your constituents.

These tools are important because they will enable the construction projects to get done on time. In the past, we have seen many projects, especially when it comes to transit infrastructure projects, that have been delayed for so many reasons. Our government—we just want to make sure we get the job done as fast as possible, but without relaxing on any environmental assessments or without relaxing any of the regulations.

In particular, I want to mention a couple of regulatory changes that we are proposing, as the member asked. The modified environmental assessment process to align the P3 delivery reduces delays while maintaining the environmental—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions? Member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park. I heard, numerous times, you spoke of the streamlined and rapid construction of transit for communities. Faster is not always better. When you tend to go faster, you break a lot of eggs. Yet your government voted down proposed amendments to have more community consultation. We were proposing to have a smooth transition to this transit construction. Why would you vote against smooth community consultation and transition?

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

As I mentioned, I sat on the committee on social policy on this legislation, and many people expressed that they want to have more frequent consultations. I want to mention here that public, and especially Indigenous, consultations are an important part of the process, which is why we will be going on engagements with local communities, local businesses, Indigenous communities, throughout the design and construction process. We want to keep people informed. That's why we have set up an online hub, ontario.ca/buildingtransit, for all things related to subways, including community meetings, events and consultation. We want to hear from you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Spadina–Fort York. But first, I want to say how impressed I was with my colleague from University–Rosedale, a true transit champion, a true transit expert. As a former head of the association with the transit riders in Toronto, she knows her transit. I think when she speaks, everyone in this House should pay close attention.

When I first went to university, I was going to be an educator. That didn't work out. I stumbled into journalism, then politics. But today, I'm going to revert back to the lecture hall and give a little history lesson on P3s. I hope my friends will pay a lot of attention. These aren't speaking notes. This is from the Auditor General's report of 2013-14. I'm going to make exhaustive mention of

what's wrong with P3s and alternative financing and procurement.

We began this P3 thing back with another Conservative government in 2001, and then Infrastructure Ontario became the body that would look after them. In May 2014, Infrastructure Ontario had been involved in the delivery of 75 AFP infrastructure projects. And so, with the audit that the auditor and her team undertook, their objective was to assess whether Infrastructure Ontario has an effective system and processes in place to ensure the decision to use the alternative financing and procurement model is suitably supported by a competent analysis of alternatives, and all significant risk and issues are considered and addressed in the final agreement.

So what did they do? They looked at 74 infrastructure projects, either completed or under way, and they wanted to know if it would be more cost-efficient if they did them the old-fashioned way. They looked into all of it—construction, financing, legal, engineering services, project management. They found the old-fashioned way of public involvement as opposed to the P3s—which were \$8 billion higher than they were estimated to be if the projects were contracted out and managed by the public sector. Now, to be fair, this \$8-billion difference is more than offset by Infrastructure Ontario's estimate of the cost of the risks associated with the public sector directly contracting out and managing. But the maintenance of those 74 facilities—in essence, Infrastructure Ontario estimated that the risk of having the projects not delivered on time and on budget were about five times higher if the public sector directly managed the projects. It valued the cost of the risks under the public sector delivery to be \$18.6 billion and the risk under AFP delivery to be \$4 billion. However, while projects managed by the private sector, for the most part, were delivered on time and on cost, about the same that their contract specified, according to Infrastructure Ontario's estimates, the tangible costs are still almost \$8 billion higher than if the public sector had been able to contract out the projects to the private sector and oversee their successful delivery.

“The private sector initially finances construction on the projects, but as with projects delivered by the public sector, the province ultimately pays for these projects under the terms of their contracts, some of which are up to 30 years long. The March 31 ... public accounts reported almost \$23.5 billion in liabilities and commitments relating to AFP projects that the present and future governments, and ultimately taxpayers, will have to pay. However, the financial impact of AFP projects is higher since the province has already borrowed funds to make the payments to AFP contractors when the various projects reached substantial completion. Those borrowed amounts, which we estimate to be an additional \$5 billion, are part of the total public debt.”

So, “to compare using AFPs to using the public sector to deliver infrastructure projects, Infrastructure Ontario relies on ‘value-for-money’ (VFM) assessments. These VFM assessments take into account both estimated tangible costs (including construction, financing, legal...

engineering..., and project management...) and the estimated costs of related risks (for example, late changes to project design or changes in ... priorities)....

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“For the projects we reviewed, it was only Infrastructure Ontario's costing of the risks and the impact of transferring some of them to the private sector under AFP that tipped the balance in favour of AFP over public sector project delivery.... While we acknowledge that there are examples of recent projects delivered by the public sector that have experienced cost overruns, there is no empirical data supporting the key assumptions used by Infrastructure Ontario to assign costs to specific risks. Instead, the agency relies on the professional judgment and experience of external advisers to make these cost assignments, making them difficult to verify. In this regard, we noted that often the delivery of projects by the public sector was cast in a negative light, resulting in significant differences in the assumptions used to value risks between the public sector delivering projects and the AFP approach. In some cases, a risk cost that the project's VFM assessment assumed would be transferred to the private sector contractor was not actually transferred....”

So, Speaker, the “combined costs over 74 AFP projects was almost \$6 billion (about a third of the overall” cost “of risk costs for public sector project delivery), and if they had not been included in the VFM assessments, public sector delivery for 18 of these projects would have been assessed at \$350 million cheaper than delivery under AFP....”

Now, Speaker, I could go on and on. There are so many examples in here, I just want to say, and a lot of recommendations made, as well. But I want you to know that during the audit, the information on projects was stored all over the place. They couldn't track down how everybody was keeping track of it all.

The final word I'll say on it is “the AFP projects that were either substantially complete or under construction have left a long-term liability of nearly \$7.5 billion and approximately \$16 billion in commitments, mainly associated with the financing, maintenance and operation of projects, for future governments to deal with. However, the actual financial impact of AFP—or P3 projects—“is higher than the nearly \$7.5 billion given to the public accounts, since these amounts do not include funds that were borrowed to make the payments” to the contractors under the P3s “when the various projects reached substantial completion. These borrowed amounts, which we estimate to be an additional \$5 billion, are part of the total public debt,” according to these public accounts.

Speaker, when we hear from the other side, “But P3s are on time and on budget,” they cost, under these 74 projects that were scrutinized by the public accounts, the Auditor General and her team, \$8 billion and another \$5 billion more than if they were done by the public.

I know this transit bill that they're going to do in Toronto—I know one line, I think I read, is going to be three different contractors. Imagine the costs on that. When my other friend from the other side said about “buy

local,” if you look at it, Speaker—the Herb Gray Parkway was Spanish, it was France, it was all over the European map, because the governments over there subsidize these contractors to come over here and do the work. The funny thing about it—some of you may remember “girdergate” on the Herb Gray Parkway—the guys that got stuck on that were the sub-subcontractors. The big guy that made all the mistakes wouldn’t pay the subs or the sub-subs.

I had a motion pass at one time that said if you’re dealing with provincial money, if you’re bidding on huge government projects, you can’t do it until all the subs have been paid from the last time. You can’t go around screwing the little subs and the sub-subcontractors in Ontario, and then still put in bids on the big ones.

That’s what was happening. I hope it’s not happening now. I hope it won’t be happening when we get into the transit on this. But stay away from the P3s. Do your homework. Don’t read the speaking notes. Do your homework, look at the Auditor General’s report, and then we’ll have a conversation about P3s.

Thank you for your time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: I’ll just start off by saying the reason I’m here is because Mike Harris and the Conservatives were in power 20 years ago. At that time, they were making all kinds of cuts to education—my children were in school at the time—and I started fighting against those cuts to schools. I fought against those cuts to schools not only because it was impacting the children of this province, but because public education is the foundation of our democracy. We need an educated populace in order for people to participate in our democracy.

The other thing Mike Harris and the Conservatives did the last time they were in power that really bothers me, as somebody who lives in Toronto, is that they kept cancelling transit plans. The Eglinton subway line had been started by the previous NDP government. The hole was already being dug, and the Conservatives spent \$10 million just filling in the hole.

It’s not just that they cancelled that plan. When the current Premier, Doug Ford, was elected to city council in 2010, there was a Transit City plan ready to go, shovel-ready, to start building in the city. He fought against that Transit City plan and cancelled those projects, and those included the Finch, Sheppard and Scarborough LRTs and the relief lines. So it’s not just that this government keeps cancelling these plans that have already been made; 25 years later, we still don’t have transit in this city. There’s an incredible cost to the people of this city, both in terms of our health and in terms of our local economy.

Before I was elected here, I sat on the Toronto Board of Health. In 2014, we received a report that said that 250 people a year die in Toronto from the pollution from cars, and another 1,100 are hospitalized each year—and that doesn’t talk to all of the people who have asthma and other respiratory issues and problems because of all the car pollution in this city.

There are two lights that are shining through this pandemic. One is that people are coming together to support

each other. The other is the sky is bluer in the GTA than it has been in decades, and it’s there because of the reduction of cars. So we need to be transitioning to more transit, to people walking and cycling, and to electric cars. This government is doing the exact opposite. They keep talking about building transit, but instead of building it, they keep cancelling the projects that are already ready to go or that are under way.

I’ll just list those projects again. My colleague from University–Rosedale talked in detail about them: The relief line has been shelved; the Eglinton East LRT has been shelved; the Lakeshore LRT has been shelved; the Sheppard LRT has been shelved; the Mississauga line and the Hamilton line have all been shelved. Instead, this government has come up with this \$29-billion plan to build transit. The question that you’ve got to ask when you’re coming up with a \$29-billion plan is, where’s the cost-benefit analysis? Why is the transit being built on these lines and not others? How do we know that we’re going to be moving the most people for the least money?

In fact, everything that we know about this transit plan is that it’s actually going to cost more and it’s going to deliver less. It’s being done through a public-private partnership. We’ve heard today that the Auditor General has said that public-private partnerships in Ontario have cost us an additional \$8 billion, more than if we had done the same projects through public projects.

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The example that was given, also, was Accenture and the Presto cards. Each time we use our Presto card in Toronto, we don’t know how much that’s actually costing, how much we’re actually being charged for the use of that Presto card. But we do know that the Auditor General has said that Presto is the most expensive fare collection system in the western world. And that’s being done through a public-private partnership.

The Ottawa LRT: As of May 13, none of the LRT was functioning, and that’s also a public-private partnership. This government is talking about this public-private partnership as if it’s going to be something that’s going to build transit better and faster, but we know from experience that it’s actually going to cost a lot more and it’s going to cause significant delays.

The other statistic that was mentioned by my colleague is that the Eglinton LRT was initially supposed to cost—in 2012, the estimate was \$4.5 billion. It’s being built through a public-private partnership, and now the cost is over \$12 billion.

The other thing that this government is doing with this transit plan is they’re eliminating the power of communities and residents and municipalities to have a say, have a voice in the transit that’s actually being built. I’ll just talk about some of the amendments that the NDP brought forward that were voted down by this government.

The NDP proposed a community benefits agreement. That’s been scrapped. What the NDP was proposing was that if, during the construction of the transit, a park is destroyed, that that park be replaced; or that you hire from historically low-income communities so that some of the

youth in our city who don't have other opportunities will have a chance to be hired, to get some skills and to build a career, potentially, in construction. That was voted down by the Conservatives.

The other thing that's been happening is the consultation. I attended two of the Metrolinx consultations on the Ontario Line. One was at Ontario Place and the other was at the CNE grounds. There was almost no information. It was a bristol board display. You could walk around the room and you could look at the bristol board and all the pictures, and there were staff members there, but the staff members didn't actually have answers to questions. They just took our questions back, and then the questions disappeared. So there was no real consultation on this. The NDP proposed that there be real consultation, but again, that was voted down.

We also asked that there be a community bill of rights to protect people from unreasonable disruption. I'll start with an example in my riding. The Longboat community lives just east of the tracks from Union Station. Six months ago, Metrolinx started doing construction there at 2 a.m. They started pounding the ground to lay these foundations for the new tracks. The sound—and some of the people recorded it—was over 100 decibels. It shook the foundations of their buildings. It shook them to the point where they had to get a structural engineer to come in and see whether there had been structural damage to their houses. These people were living in that, and the noise started without any consultation, without any warning. At 2 a.m. in the morning, they started this incredible noise.

We proposed a community bill of rights so that communities would be protected from that kind of disruptive noise. Again, the Conservatives voted it down.

We also asked for a construction working group. We asked that, if you're going to be building this transit—and it's great that we're building transit; the NDP want transit built. We need transit built. But if you're going to be doing it, you need to coordinate with all of the other departments that are doing work in the city and all of the other projects in the city. You can't just have one person making all the decisions or having the transit construction trumping all of the other projects, because there's a potential for much greater costs to the community. For example, if sewers needed to be done or if water lines needed to be replaced, then that may take priority because of the potential damage if those sewer lines or if those water lines breach. You have to work together with the rest of the city departments in order to develop the transit plan. We asked for a construction working group. Again, that was voted down.

I'm almost out of time. I will just say, in the end, I think if I could make one change to this bill, I would say that the name should be changed from Building Transit Faster to building transit slower, at a much greater cost.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now it's time for questions. I'll go over to the government side and I'll recognize the member from Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Good to see you in the chair, Mr. Speaker. It's great to have everybody here speaking in the Legislature today.

Members opposite: It's good to hear what you had to say. I would disagree with what you said. I think, with respect to your opposition against P3s, I don't quite understand. Some 95% of P3s in Ontario are on budget; 70% are on time. Ontario is a world leader in public-private partnerships. We have people globally, all over the world, coming to Infrastructure Ontario right here in this great province to see what a great job we do, working together—business, government—to build partnerships. Since 2005, we've invested about \$100 billion in P3s here in Ontario. So clearly we're doing a good job on this.

My question to the members opposite is, do you feel governments can build subways cheaper and quicker than public-private partnerships?

Mr. Chris Glover: It's not that I believe that the government can build transit cheaper and better and faster than doing it through a P3; it's that the Auditor General has said clearly that we can build it faster.

I'll give one more anecdote. I was on a plane one time, and the woman sitting next to me worked for a major financing company from Europe. We were talking about P3s. She was someone who makes deals for P3s. She was saying that P3s are wonderful things. I said, "But they cost taxpayers a lot more because it's much more expensive for a private company to borrow money than it is for the government to do it. So just the financing costs alone make P3s more expensive." And she agreed. Even though that was her industry, even though that was her business, she agreed that the financing for P3s is much more expensive when it's done with a private company than if the government were just to borrow the money up front itself.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Ian Arthur: It strikes me today: the love-dislike relationship that any government must have with the Auditor General and the fine work that she does. I ran for public office, Speaker, because I read the report that she did on the unfair hydro plan and all the debt that the Liberals had taken on and put on future generations.

I like listening to podcasts. There was a recent Freakonomics podcast that talked about the planning fallacy and why we are all over time and over budget on almost every single major infrastructure project across the world, and what we can actually do about it. What it suggested was that, rather than trying to cost out and do projections, we need to look at what similar projects cost and accept that as a likely final answer. We have a planning fallacy and we have an optimism bias, and we don't do it right.

So my question to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh is, how should you proceed with public infrastructure in a way where we know that they can come in on time and on budget?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to the member from Kingston and Islands for that question. The problem with P3s is that they're of such a magnitude that they're bundled into huge amounts of money. The only people that can really qualify—there might be one or two Canadian firms that can put in a bid on it, but that's in partnership

with people from foreign countries whose government subsidized them to come here because a lot of that money then goes back to Spain or back to France or back to whatever.

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It's public money. It's taxpayers' money, at the end of the day. There's only one taxpayer. Along the way, you can use it and put it into a public-run building or contracting project, or you can throw your money over to Europe and let them walk away with all the Ontario taxpayers' money.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: For those who have just joined us, we're debating Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act. The speakers who we've had here on the government side have spoken about having a plan to get four priority subway projects built, but we also have a plan to accelerate the delivery of these projects.

I wonder if the members from Windsor–Tecumseh and Spadina–Fort York could speak to the opposition's plan to do either of these things.

Mr. Chris Glover: First of all, we had a Transit City plan. We had a plan in place in 2010 in the city of Toronto to build transit, and the Premier, when he was on city council, fought tooth and nail against that, and so nothing was built for 10 years. We're now 10 years out from that, and he kept promising, "Subways, subways, subways"—nothing got built.

The other plan that we had in the NDP: We had a plan for an Eglinton subway line. The last time we were in power, we actually started digging the hole to build the subway line, and then the Conservatives got into power and filled the hole in.

So yes, we have a plan. We've had plans. The problem is that the Conservatives keep getting in and scrapping those plans.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. It sounds to me, as I read and listen to the evidence, that these public-private partnerships have been thoroughly discredited by now. The evidence and Auditor General—all of the evidence, whether experientially and in terms of the experts, speaks to the issues that you've been speaking about.

I wonder if you could elucidate why you believe governments continue to use them, and when do you think the nail will be put in their coffin and they will stop being used?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: There were so many recommendations in that report. One of them was: "Do a better job of having the people making these judgments declare their conflicts of interest." The way government is structured these days, and the way parties get financed, they have to go out and hold fundraisers and get money into their coffers. The people who go to these fundraisers—the big, very expensive fundraisers, not the \$20 spaghetti dinners—the people who want to do business with the

government come and they provide money. We saw when the Liberals were there, they had that cash-for-access scandal, where ministers would go out to raise money with the people they were dealing with.

So when the bankers and the lawyers and the big money lenders want to stay in business, they court government officials to go to them when they have a billion-dollar project. And as much as we say, "Do a better job of assessing the public portion of it as opposed to the private portion of it," unfortunately, the Conservative government and the Liberal government still have a lot of friends in banking and industry and construction, and continue going back and forth to their friends.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I would ask the very experienced member from Windsor–Tecumseh if he feels that the fact that, in politics, we do run for office, as was mentioned by the member, but that we have little terms—do you feel that part of the struggle for building transit is because, before this period of government, when we were elected two years ago, previous governments were perhaps too focused on projects that they could complete within their four-year terms rather than looking towards building projects for the next generation?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for your response.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you for the question. It's a very interesting concept. The unfortunate part about long-term planning is that—you're exactly right: Another government comes in and throws a monkey wrench into it. It has been mentioned by my friends from Toronto about the projects that were on the books. The city of Toronto had bought into it; they had a project going. The government threw that plan out and has the new plan. Some friend of somebody, on the back of a napkin, came up with the Ontario Line. There was no consultation on it; it was just flopped in front of everybody. Now we're there.

We go back to all kind of examples of bad planning interspersed by one level of government to another. We all should be on the same board for the best plan because I think everybody agrees we need better transit, especially in the GTHA.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Few things in life are as frustrating as sitting in traffic. I think we can all agree on that. But some of those things are sitting on a crowded bus or standing on a crowded bus or standing on a crowded subway. Sometimes just missing your connection will be that little extra amount of time that makes you late for work and throws the rest of your day into chaos.

It's quite clear that building new transit across the GTHA will certainly help address some of these challenges. It's why—and in fact I was reminded the other day that no government in the history of Ontario invested more in transit and transportation than the previous Liberal government, despite what we've heard from some this afternoon. But that doesn't mean that this bill or the process by

which the government is moving forward with it and with these projects is without criticism.

At committee, there was virtual unanimity that the investment in improving public transit in Toronto and the GTHA was welcome and would benefit Ontario residents. That being said, residents were also clear that they have not felt that their legitimate concerns are being heard by this government. And after seeing every single amendment proposed for this bill rejected outright, I can see their point.

We are committed to building public transit in the GTHA and across the province, but there are improvements to be made to how the government and Metrolinx are managing their relationship with the local communities. We heard consistently from members of the public that they have not felt that their voices are being heard. We heard time and again that the consultation process—if you can call it that—has been lacking. The testimony was very clear: The community supports getting on with public transit, but they need to be part of the process. So we proposed amendments to the bill that would help lead the government in this direction.

We proposed an amendment to require the government and Metrolinx to work with the community in a collaborative way. Our amendment would have ensured proper public consultation in the design phase to provide clarity to residents about where exactly these lines are going and the impacts that they might expect to feel within their community. Our amendment would have required that the government and Metrolinx continue that engagement throughout the entirety of the construction process.

In her remarks earlier today, the minister recognized that construction would have a significant impact on communities. This is why we felt it was important for the government and Metrolinx to continue engaging with communities throughout the duration of this generational plan, as someone has called it, to ensure that legitimate concerns about the impacts of construction on daily life can be heard and can be addressed.

1520

Of course, Mr. Speaker, consultation does not need to be codified in legislation. But we heard time and again that that consultation wasn't happening. When given the opportunity to ensure that the government was held to a legislated standard, the government for the people didn't feel they should be required to talk or meet the people. I've never understood this hesitation to public consultation. Good management practice and, frankly, good politics dictates that speaking to those you represent is always a good idea. It's a benefit, not a hindrance.

Our amendments would have required that the government provide an annual preview of what to expect in construction, to highlight the milestones that are expected to be achieved and to provide proper notification to affected residents, businesses, municipalities, etc. Again, the government members did not support these amendments. Apparently, providing a plan of activity, giving us insight as to what would come ahead for the year and notifying people of that activity was too onerous. It would

take too much time. Writing down your plan and communicating it with those that it affects would, somehow, slow down this multigenerational multibillion-dollar mega-project. That's actually what we heard from the government. I don't know about everyone else in this chamber, but I've always found that planning out my activity has actually helped me stay on schedule, that those days where everything is going wrong, when you're running behind, where nothing seems to be working properly are the days that are not well planned out. Good planning in construction speeds up construction. It's that simple. It's a lesson learned over and over and over again. It's not a lesson the government wanted to be included in legislation. Moreover, the publication of this plan provides incentive to the contractors that will eventually be hired to stay on schedule. I've lived through the Ottawa experience of projects that are behind schedule, and the public pressure brought to bear because that schedule is public is enormous and certainly incentivizes activity and action. But the government didn't believe, and I presume doesn't believe, that this transparency and potential accountability into their project was in their best interest.

Finally, we heard from residents that on the few occasions they were allowed to provide their feedback, they felt their voices were being ignored. We heard from members today: They would attend a meeting, they would ask questions, they would provide information and seek answers, and it would be blank faces on the other side, emails that went unresponded, phone calls that were never returned. Metrolinx, or the government, wasn't interested in hearing their feedback and their complaints. They were checking a box to say that they've done it.

So we proposed an amendment that would require the government to reply to residents about their concerns. Simply put, the amendment would require that Metrolinx acknowledge the concern, provide an answer and publish those concerns and those answers on a regular basis so that everyone is aware and everyone could feel confident in the response from their government. In fairness, I don't think this is a very onerous task. In fact, I believe that responding to residents is something we do every day. The government chose not to support these measures that would improve consultation, require proper planning and would lead residents to feel that they were part of the process.

Now, none of this needs to necessarily be legislated. The minister can require this action to take place. Good management, if it exists at Metrolinx, can insist that these actions be taken, and all of this can be written into project agreements. And so there is still hope that, as we move forward with these projects, the government can choose to listen to the people. The government can choose to get feedback and make changes. The government can choose, make that choice, and I hope they do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to the member from Orléans's comments, and it was a little bit confusing, Mr. Speaker. I just want to put it in perspective. I'd like to congratulate the member for his election. However, when

he spoke about his experience and having lived through the Ottawa experience of projects that were on time, on schedule and on budget, it's a little bit shocking to me because the member used to be the chair of the Ottawa Transit Commission, who was responsible for the Ottawa LRT project. So I'd like to maybe get some clarification from the member on which transportation project he's talking about in his Ottawa experience that was on time, on schedule and on budget.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I think if you were to check Hansard, those words were not spoken by me. I certainly did say that I've lived through the Ottawa experience, and that experience was about the accountability measures that having public information in a contract provides. Publishing milestones that you want to achieve in a year provides that accountability to residents, provides that accountability to the media, so that governments and the contractor, the eventual winner of a competitive process, can be held to account to what they're saying they're going to do.

The government chose not to build those accountability measures into the legislation. It's not too late. They can put that type of accountability into the project agreement. The minister can direct Metrolinx to include it. I hope that the minister chooses to include accountability measures in any procurement process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Jamie West: I want to also thank the member for Orléans for his comments, and also, congratulations on your recent election.

As a new MPP myself, I have a question I asked the government. I didn't really get an answer to it, so I'm going to ask it to you. My understanding is that, prior to the election, there were plans in place for a subway project in Toronto. After the election, the government ripped those up. So my background with construction would be that there were environmental assessments, engineering assessments, safety risk assessments—all kinds of time, energy and resources poured into that. Does it make any sense to you that the government would say it's quicker and more cost-effective to throw away the plans we have and start from scratch, just with your background with transportation as well?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that question very well. In fact, we experienced the same thing in Ottawa. A Conservative mayor backed by Conservative cabinet ministers ripped up and threw out the first Ottawa LRT project, and the city of Ottawa lost \$100 million in real cash, lost a decade of inaction and lost an infrastructure round, basically leading to \$400 million or \$500 million not invested in the nation's capital.

So no, I don't believe it's smart to rip up construction projects or projects that have already seen approval, because you do lose a decade. That being said, we cannot continue this process of continually ripping things up and starting over. Otherwise nothing will ever get done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I just wanted to comment. I actually listened very intently to the member from

Orléans's statements, and I invite him to check the Hansard record, because he literally said, "I've lived through the Ottawa experience of projects that were on schedule." I would once again ask the member to explain and maybe give some examples of which Ottawa projects he worked on as transit commissioner that were on schedule.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I don't want to quibble with the member, but I was speaking very specifically to accountability measures within the contract, and the pressure that publicizing those milestones and standards to be achieved has on the contractor and on the government to maintain schedule. But in terms of projects that have been on schedule, OC Transpo has had many bus projects, transit projects, park-and-ride projects that have been on schedule. I would encourage the local member to communicate with her city councillors in Ottawa if she has any questions about those.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I apologize to the member from Orléans; my back is to him as I'm posing a question to him.

When I heard you speak about the government and the problems you were having with the government in dealing with the LRT, was that the Liberal government of Ms. Wynne and Mr. McGuinty that you were dealing with? Because transportation takes a long time to plan and to build.

The other thing, if you could clarify for me—I think when I was in Ottawa the last time, I was reading a paper, and it talked about how in the wintertime the LRT is having trouble through the snow or going up a slight grade in the roadbed. Why wasn't that picked up at some point?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for the question. The challenge with the first iteration of the Ottawa light rail plan was with a Conservative mayor who was elected in 2006 and ripped up, in fact, the Liberal plan to build LRT was backed by a federal Conservative cabinet minister. This led to lawsuits and the city of Ottawa losing \$100 million in real cash and a decade of making progress on public transit.

Vis-à-vis the challenges that Ottawa LRT has faced, those are not secret. They're well publicized. There have been challenges throughout the winter. In fact, the award-winning contract the city of Ottawa signed with the consortium has protected taxpayers in every way from those eventualities. The consortium that was responsible for building the project was not paid for up to a year, and that's as a result of the innovative procurement process that the city of Ottawa went through.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, I think the record will speak for itself. However, I'd like to move on, because if the member was in fact talking about transparency and accountability, then my question to the member is: Why were the details of the phase 2 bidding process not revealed? Why did the city not act in a transparent or

accountable manner, especially with the member being chair of the transit commission, to inform the city of Ottawa and its citizens that the bid did not meet the technical requirements and should have actually been disqualified? And yet it was still approved anyway.

Mr. Stephen Blais: The award-winning contract and P3 that the city of Ottawa went through for stage 2 of LRT—a project fully endorsed by the government. When the Premier came to Ottawa to announce the government's funding for this project, he espoused the virtues of the Trillium Line and the Confederation Line and the efforts the city has gone to to move LRT forward in our city. In fact, the details of the stage 2 contract, redacted for commercially sensitive information, are publicly available.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Once again, in listening to the debate between the independent Liberal member and the government speakers, I'm struck by one of the key—well, one of my favourite sayings: Liberal, Tory, same old story. But also on the distinction of support for P3s, that's something that I do associate with the Liberal governments very, very much.

I just want to read from an article here. It says: "While the notion of a P3 is intended to encourage collaborative behaviour within a project consortium in between public and private sectors, in practice, the rigid structure of a typical infrastructure model can inhibit free communication collaboration. In fact, it stifles innovation."

So my question to the member is, does he still stand behind the P3 model? Would he ever consider using it, moving forward, when we know it costs more to the taxpayers?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for the question.

P3s have demonstrated that they can be very effective in some circumstances and perhaps not so effective in others. There is not one rigid, black-or-white answer to the P3 question. Every project needs to be evaluated on its merits and the financial model and the procurement model chosen to finance it based on those merits.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I was also there at the announcement with the Premier back in October 2018. That was actually well before the details of the problems with the bid were revealed. So my question to the member is: Why did the city of Ottawa, and you as chair of the transit commission, approve a technical bid that did not meet the specifications?

Mr. Stephen Blais: The city of Ottawa's Auditor General has reviewed the procurement process for the stage 2 Trillium Line and found no irregularities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for questions has expired, therefore further debate.

M^{me} Gila Martow: J'ai l'honneur de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour parler du projet de loi 171, la loi accélérant le transport en commun, présenté par notre ministre des Transports. Il s'agit d'un projet de loi qui

profitera à tous les Ontariennes et Ontariens pour de nombreux projets de transports en commun nécessaires dans la province. Nous ne voulons pas simplement construire des transports en commun; nous voulons le faire rapidement et efficacement. Cette pandémie nous a montré que le gouvernement est en mesure d'agir rapidement en cas de volonté de tous les niveaux du gouvernement et du public. Ce projet de loi vise à couper des années dans les délais. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous devons tous travailler ensemble dans un effort coordonné.

Mr. President—we say "President" in French—Mr. Speaker, it's a real honour today to get up. It's very exciting. I think it's one of the reasons that a lot of us ran for office. Certainly one of the main reasons I ran for office is to see transit get built in the GTA, specifically in York region. We're talking about Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act. We need to build it quickly, efficiently and with the coordination of all levels of government—non-partisan. We all want to work together and make sure it happens and make sure that all of the different trades that have to be involved, the different neighbourhoods and businesses that have to be inconvenienced—that we all focus on the common good. Just like we're doing during this pandemic, we're all working together to ensure that Ontario is healthy in terms of the virus, but also economically—that we can get back on our feet and work towards ensuring that future generations have a strong, healthy and safe Ontario to live, work and play in.

There are five main aspects to this bill. The proposed provisions are:

(1) Corridor developer permits: This would require development and construction activities in the transit corridor lands to obtain permits. This would give the ability to coordinate activities in and around the transit corridor and stations, manage the timing of construction activities, and hopefully reduce impacts to safety and improve the schedule and the budget.

(2) The ability to enter lands with specific purposes and to limit delays associated with obtaining permission for due diligence work like soil testing and things like encroachment and the removal of trees.

(3) Land assembly: With the exception of lands expropriated for the four priority subway projects for the hearing-of-necessity process under the Expropriations Act, we want to see that there's an updated process for timelines for land assembly reduced from approximately 12 to seven months.

(4) Utility company co-operation: That's a big problem. I remember specifically on Bathurst—I think it was at Dupont—there was a project where the street was dug up for one utility company, and then six months later, I think Hydro One had to dig up the exact same street in the exact same spot to do their work. So now we've created legislation where the utility companies have to notify each other in advance if they're doing work anywhere so that the others can join in. That's called real co-operation.

(5) Municipal service and right-of-way access—the ability for the minister to issue an order outlining conditions where Metrolinx could use or modify municipal

assets like roadways and municipal services. We certainly know that transit would proceed a lot better where we've negotiated these types of agreements.

1540

The members from the opposition even spoke, as well as from our side, about building transit for the next generation. It reminds me of a piece of artwork that my mother did that had multi-generations of our family. In the Jewish community we say "l'dor va'dor," which means "from generation to generation." That's a big focus of the Jewish community, educating this generation to be raising the next generation and educating that generation, knowing their history and preparing—because we're not just here for our own survival and our own enjoyment of life, as it were, or our own careers; we are here to ensure that when we're gone, whether it's from the Legislature or from this earth, there's a strong, educated, healthy and productive generation to follow us.

That's what we need with transit. We need to focus not just on our terms in office or our government in office. We are focused on getting transit built for future generations of Ontarians, for all of us to work together to see it done. I'm reminded of those transit maps that I'm sure everybody here will remember. They compare the subway lines in London, say, or in Asia and Seoul, Korea—it's just a big spiderweb, is the perfect way to describe it, of lines and stations—and then they compare that and overlap it with Toronto, which is a few straight lines in different directions. We're so disappointed because we were really a world leader in public transit, especially subways.

I've been watching Murdoch Mysteries on CBC and some of the episodes talk about building transit in Toronto: the streetcars and tunnelling to have transit underground and things like that in the early 1900s, taking you back in history, as it were. But we could just all imagine what it was like to live in those days with horses and buggies, and envisioning what the future would be like today where we're living and the opportunities that we have.

I represent a riding in York region, and Thornhill does not quite see the Yonge subway coming up as close to our riding as we would like. It ends now in the member from Willowdale's riding, as he mentioned. We want to see it get up through Thornhill. It will go right through my riding on Yonge Street and right through the top of the riding into Richmond Hill.

We want to see that for many reasons. We have already a bit of a transit hub going on in the area where we're planning to build the final subway station. Hopefully it will continue. I believe that we should never stop tunnelling subways, that it should just be an ongoing thing going in every direction. Hopefully some day we're going to have real transit to our Pearson airport that really connects us properly for such a major city.

We already have a GO station there. We have the York Region Transit bus terminal. We have the vivaNext rapidway buses, which I'm on the record thinking wasn't maybe the wisest transit planning decision for York region. I really wanted those monies to be focused on the Yonge subway. And now we're going to have a subway

there within, hopefully, a decade or two. We're going to get it done quickly. They always say it's 15 years to build a subway, and we've been waiting in Thornhill for 30 years. Successive governments have promised. They've promised when they're running for office, and then somehow it all fizzles out once they're in government. And we heard even from the NDP that they said that there were grand plans with Toronto with the previous Liberal government—lots of promises and very little action.

We're going to get this subway built, and I would like to see some type of transit hub up at the SilverCity in Richmond Hill, with the GO train, with the buses and with a subway, and hopefully maybe even some day some connection of an LRT or something to the airport, which would be beautiful and wonderful—and maybe have a transit hub at Pearson airport as well.

One of the things that I had been discussing with Kevin Sack—he's the vice-president of marketing, communications and government relations at the 407—is because the 407 will be going right by where that subway station is, to ensure that we have some kind of parking off the 407 that you wouldn't have to necessarily get onto Yonge street, because it's a big, big worry of mine that people are going to come from the east, where there is no subway. They're going to come from Markham, they're going to come from Whitby and they're going to try to get to the Yonge subway. They're going to want to park. They're going to want to drop somebody off or pick somebody up. What I envisioned is that you would stay on the 407 and either exit in some kind of loop into the middle of the 407, between the east and west lanes, or have a separate exit going north and south off of the eastbound and westbound lanes and have multi-level parking using the transponder—so no getting a ticket, no putting a credit card in. You go in, it calculates the time of day and how long you were there. It beeps in and beeps out—fully electronic. In fact, maybe you get a five-minute grace period to pick somebody up or drop somebody off. But if you're going there and you're waiting for them for half an hour, I think you could pay for parking maybe for that as well. I'd like to see our government have that type of partnership.

It is a real York region coup to see this subway get started and past the different stages. We have Mayor Frank Scarpitti from Markham, who says, "The time to build this critical rapid transit link is now. As Chair of the York Region Rapid Transit Corp., I have spent my tenure advocating for long-term transit funding and advancing the Yonge North subway extension. The province's investment in this project will connect the region, open up economic opportunities in Markham and York region, and ease travel times for commuters throughout the GTA while meeting the needs of our growing communities."

Then, of course, we have Mayor Mauricio Bevilacqua, from the city of Vaughan: "York region council has taken an important step forward in the development of the Yonge North subway extension. Today, we voted"—I'm not sure what day he wrote this—"in favour of authorizing York region to execute an agreement with the Ontario government to build the estimated \$5.6-billion subway extension.

“The City of Vaughan has always been a strong advocate for the Yonge North subway extension. This project is critical to those who live, work and commute in Vaughan and beyond. I am encouraged by the commitment from the province and I look forward to the federal government’s support as well.”

It’s a “vital transportation infrastructure project that will have far-reaching benefits to Vaughan and all greater Toronto area communities.”

Then we have Mayor Barrow of Richmond Hill. He says that the Yonge North subway extension to Richmond Hill Centre is a “game changer” for Richmond Hill.

“This is a huge opportunity for growth—and it just makes sense.

“It makes sense for the economy, for community growth and intensification, for the environment and for city building.

“There can be no doubt it will bring further economic prosperity to Richmond Hill. We look forward to continuing working with key partners to bring it to life.”

Then we have the chair of York region council, Wayne Emmerson. He says, “The regional municipality of York and York regional council are encouraged by the Ontario government’s plans to accelerate transit delivery and support efforts to streamline critical infrastructure and priority transit projects.

“Transportation remains the top issue for half of all York region residents. This is why regional council continues to make record-level investments in transportation and transportation-related projects, including the extension of the Yonge North subway line into the city of Richmond Hill and many road construction and rehabilitation projects across the region.”

And regional councillor Jim Jones in Markham is known for decades for advocating for a transit hub in the region, for advocating for better connectivity and better land use development in terms of residential as well as commercial, and all tied in, and that we should be planning a vast area—not just focusing on building stations, but we should be focusing on the entire region and how it will all connect, so that obviously, afterwards, we don’t say, “Gee, it would have been nice if we had done something.”

His suggestions for the hub: “A multi-purpose integrated utility tunnel is one of the several infrastructures in urban areas which can accommodate several networks, such as a high-voltage 407 transmission line, district energy system pipes, central garbage collection system pipes, electrical fibre optic cables, gas, water and sewer pipes inside the utility corridor tunnel and an underground pathway system. There are several benefits of these multi-utility tunnels”—and he’s suggesting using the hub as a new opportunity to build retail underground paths, bus terminals, GO train stations, subways, all integrated.

So it’s very exciting news. We all want to see this happen. We know there’s a lot of residential development that’s going on in the Langstaff area there. I think it’s supposed to be 15,000 units of condos and apartments. We all know that York region is already a great place to live and work and play, but with this transit development,

many areas in the GTA and York region and the regions just out of the GTA will benefit from this development.

1550

So I’m excited, and I know the residents of Thornhill are excited. They just want to see those machines get up to our riding, coming from Willowdale, and I would suggest that we start tunnelling in both directions as soon as we can on all the subway lines. We can’t afford to not do this. We’re already decades behind, in terms of transit building.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really enjoyed the opportunity to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It’s now time for questions. The member from Rosedale—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): University–Rosedale. I knew that. I knew that.

Ms. Jessica Bell: You did. Thank you, Speaker. You say it in such an excitable way, too, so you’re forgiven.

Thank you for your presentation, MPP for Thornhill. Like you, I’m excited that the Yonge line extension is going further north. Obviously, I have concerns because we need to make sure that a relief line or something equivalent to it is built to make sure that there’s still capacity lower on down the line. But I know that you agree with me on that one, too, and that two lines can be built at the same time.

My question is this: Communities experience the benefits of construction, but they also experience the pain of construction. Construction is going to be coming to your area. We introduced amendments to ease or limit the pain of construction while still building at the same time so we can build transit right. What are you going to say to your residents when they start calling you, complaining about construction? What are you going to say, given that this government is supporting this pretty concerning bill?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to thank the member from University–Rosedale for her question. I sort of alluded to it, that we saw these rapid bus lanes built all over York region for an outrageous sum of money. The construction from those projects was unbelievably slow, so we’ve lived through that. I think that, for a subway, people had said to me—all those phone calls. You’re right. I got lots of complaints about the vivaNext rapidway project going through. I know they had to hire special communications staff just to deal with it. People said, “If this was for a subway, I wouldn’t be calling you.” I heard that over and over again. That’s how badly people want the subway. People are willing to offer anything that they can do to help out to get that subway built.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It’s great to hear the member from Thornhill talk passionately about transit, which I know is important to all of us here in the chamber. For those in the GTA, we know what we’re up against. It’s very rare to have three levels of government come out in support of something as big as this. I very rarely do see that—federal, municipal, provincial.

I just wanted to get your thoughts and perspectives. We're going through a COVID-19 epidemic right now—a pandemic—and ridership is down. Some people may be doubting why this is still necessary. Do we still need to build these big transit plans for the future? I just want to get your thoughts on that.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much to the member from Oakville for the question.

Absolutely, we have to build transit. There's too much density in the GTA. We can't be choked by absolutely everybody taking cars. What I think the pandemic has shown us is that a lot of companies are realizing people can work from home. If everybody who is able to work from home worked from home one day a week on different days, that could effectively cut down on traffic congestion by 10% to 15%, from what I have read somewhere.

I'm really hopeful that we will build the transit, that this pandemic has shown us that all levels of government—when they need to, when they're scared enough, when it's a crisis—do work together and they find a way to get it done. I'm hoping the same will be for transit. We're all going to work together and we're going to get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Jamie West: I want to also thank the member for Thornhill. I like it in debate when we learn a bit about each other, and it's great to find that we have a common interest in Murdoch Mysteries.

I have a question about municipalities. I'm going to paraphrase from the bill, but basically, it says that the minister does not have to compensate a municipality or local board for damages relating to the removal of an obstruction and that the municipality can't appeal to the LPAT. Knowing that municipalities are always sagging from generations of provincial downloading and that the government is still asking for four or five cents on every dollar—which, in my city of Sudbury, equates to millions of dollars—and that the only way municipalities can cover this stuff is to reduce services and raise taxes, why would we exempt municipalities from a provision that would allow them to recover the costs of any damages?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that the municipalities are going to benefit far more than the federal government or the provincial government, even, in terms of getting a subway going from one end of Thornhill through to the other end in their community. It's going to be pretty dramatic for development. Development: We all know what that means. It means more in taxes, so I think that the municipality of Markham, as well as Vaughan will see a lot of benefits.

In terms of costs and money, as I mentioned before, the rapid transit lanes were outrageously expensive. That was a lot of provincial funding—my understanding is that it was pretty much all provincial funding—and it was regional. York region council agreed to do this and spent some money to do this, and I see very little economic benefit for the region because of it.

But the Yonge subway? Boy, oh, boy. Every penny we put into that Yonge subway to get it expanded to the right

areas with the right kind of development and the right kind of transit hub we will see back in future generations, probably tenfold.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: During the federal election campaign, the current government committed at least 40% funding to our priority subway projects, yet that hasn't translated to date in money. Can the member from Thornhill tell us why it's so important that we have the federal government at the table to get these projects done?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much for the question, the member from Whitby.

The federal government is aware that the GTA is a driving economic force in Canada. It's one of the biggest cities in North America, and I am sure that the federal government understands how important it is for the entire country that the GTA is able to get the investment that it deserves and the fantastic growth that is needed to keep the GTA as a viable powerhouse for Canada's economy.

I think that I would invite all the municipal partners, some of whom I mentioned, to appeal to their federal counterparts in their municipalities to ensure that the federal government understands the importance of transit development in the GTA.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Thornhill for her comments. Similarly, it is interesting—with the sharing of family anecdotes so we get to know one another—her comments about generation to generation.

When I think about that word “generation,” though, I also think how it has additional meanings, such as “creation.” It also makes me think of its antithesis or its antonym, “destruction.”

The filling of the Eglinton subway line cost an estimated \$40 million at the time. Would you consider that good value for money?

Mrs. Gila Martow: All I can say is that as I mentioned, there's a lot of money that is spent, and future generations look back and might question what was done.

I think we can all agree that building transit is the way to go, that it's vital, that it's not something that's just nice to have, that it's a “we must have.” So we must invest in transit, we must ensure that it does get built and it does get built properly. I think what ensures getting projects done is when all the levels of government, all parties and all the residential groups—if it's even unions—write that down right now and say, “This is a priority to get these subways built and we're going to do everything in our power to ensure that we are there to support it.”

1600

It's not just a Doug Ford government project. This is an Ontario project, and I think that 100% of us should get on board and agree to do everything that we can to make sure that it actually gets funded properly and gets built quickly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions? You have 20 seconds, the member from Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I think I should get a few extra seconds because you extended your decision there. I just wanted to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'll take that as a challenge.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Oh, okay. I wanted to thank the member from Thornhill for her very insightful comments today.

I live in Ottawa now, but I grew up in Richmond Hill and I know the huge impact this is going to have for that area.

In the time remaining, can you maybe just speak a little bit to what your constituents think about this project?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Thornhill for 10 seconds.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I've been here for six years and I can say it's the number one issue in my riding and the number one thing that I hear the most often. Even during the pandemic, believe it or not, I hear people every now and then mention the Yonge subway extension.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Well done. Thank you very much.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Third time lucky. Thank you, Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to get up this afternoon and to speak to this really important bill and this really important topic.

We've heard a lot about the importance of getting transit built and getting it built quickly. I've also been listening extremely intently to the debate this afternoon. I've heard about a number of the really important amendments that the opposition put forward in committee, each and every one of which was voted down by the government.

I have been listening intently particularly to the comments of my colleague the member from University–Rosedale and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh about the perils of P3s, public-private partnerships.

I want to say that, in light of the fact that we want and need transit to be built quickly and well, I think it's an enormous pity that the government has not seen fit to take advantage of the wisdom and the amendments put forth by the opposition members who have expertise in these areas.

I want to talk about two reasons why that's the case. The first one is that Metrolinx has an extraordinary trust deficit with the public. It's really important that you understand this.

When I was asked to run in the last election, one of the first things that I began to hear was from constituents about their terrible experiences with Metrolinx. These four lines that we're talking about here today do not run through Beaches–East York. However, the expansion of the GO corridor does, and my constituents whose properties back onto that corridor have been horrified by their experiences with Metrolinx. They invited me to come

along, even during the election campaign, to some of the meet-the-public meetings that they were holding with Metrolinx, trying to get answers from Metrolinx.

Since then, I have been to many Metrolinx meetings and I have listened to many tears cried on my shoulder by my distraught constituents, and that is because attending a Metrolinx meeting is like going down the rabbit hole in Alice in Wonderland, except that you don't end up in a particularly pleasant place. You end up in a baffling place—well, Alice did as well, but this is like a baffling place that's crossed with some kind of a horror movie.

It's ridiculous. You have these people who seem at the outset to be intelligent and they seem to be nice, and they are asked very reasonable questions about how and when their concerns over noise and vibration damage are going to be addressed by Metrolinx. The folks at Metrolinx act like they've never heard these questions before, and they say, "Oh, that's a very interesting question. Let us take it back and we'll come back with you," and you think, "Oh, that's reasonable"—except that the next time, the exact same thing happens, and then it happens the time after that and the time after that and the time after that.

Remember that court case at the end of Alice in Wonderland—the one where absolutely nothing that anybody says makes any sense whatsoever, and the queen ends up saying, "No, we need the sentence before the verdict," and that's when she tells Alice that her head needs to be chopped off, and Alice says, "You're nothing but a pack of cards." It feels like that's what you're living through when you go to a Metrolinx meeting.

The problem with that is that these chickens come home to roost when you try to push through processes that leave Metrolinx even less accountable and even less transparent. When you have a process that has a transparency problem and a trust deficit, and we're saying to you, as the opposition, "Here are some things that will help to increase the trust, increase the transparency and help you with that process," and you don't take them up for reasons that I, frankly, don't understand, what you end up doing is deepening the trust deficit, deepening the problems and making an already untransparent process even less transparent.

I did go to the information meetings that were held over the Ontario Line in the neighbouring riding of Toronto–Danforth, and I can tell you there were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people who were deeply concerned, who wanted to make sure that the line was going to go underground so that it wouldn't have the expropriation issues that my colleague from University–Rosedale was talking about, and indeed, they were met with these boards and people who were unwilling or unable to answer any of their questions. This is where we are now.

Why does it matter so much? It matters for all of us, because we all want to be able to get out of our cars and to be able to get where we need to go, but it matters particularly—and this is the second issue that I really want to delve into here—for people for whom transit is an equity issue. For many people in this city, transit is a question of equity. It's not simply a question—although it's

important—of saying, “I’d really like, for the sake of the environment, to get out of my car and to be able to take transit.” It is actually a question of equity.

I think that I want to take a little bit of time to unpack what I’m talking about here, because the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a very severe light on precisely the neighbourhoods that require transit and for whom transit is such an equity issue. As we’ve seen, COVID-19 has hit particularly hard neighbourhoods of people who can’t stay home to work. These are folks who, unlike the people mentioned by the member from Thornhill, don’t have jobs that allow them to stay home. These are folks who must take transit to get where it is that they’re going. These are people who have essential worker jobs that meant that they had to leave the house. These are people who had to take transit to get where they were going because they don’t have private vehicles that they can drive there and leave. These jobs that they have are often poorly paid or part-time, and they have to have more than one of them because they don’t have benefits. They’re jobs that put them on the front lines.

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If and when they got sick, they were coming home to crowded apartments, because, often, they live with many family members, which meant that they couldn’t self-isolate, so that hospitals like the one in my riding, Michael Garron, have been seeing multiple members of the same family hospitalized—not just sick, but hospitalized—with severe cases, sometimes resulting in death, of COVID-19. We don’t know precisely where these folks were contracting the illness, but we do know that some people were becoming ill on transit. We know that because transit workers were becoming ill, and we know that because we have seen evidence of buses and subways that were crowded, even in the middle of the pandemic, where people without PPE, because there wasn’t PPE—particularly at the beginning, there wasn’t the ability of everybody to have a mask—were hanging over each other, holding on to all the poles. We don’t know who was ill and who was not ill, particularly because we also know that a great many people who have COVID-19 are in fact asymptomatic.

One of the related issues is the fact that there are between 9,000 and 11,000—I’ve heard different estimates—folks who are experiencing homelessness here in the GTA. There have not been hotel rooms or spaces where all of them can self-isolate. And what did that mean? That means that the vast majority of them are in shelters. Shelters are overcrowded. Some shelters now have, indeed, two metres between the beds, but for a very long time they didn’t. Even now there are some that don’t. So you have people who are sleeping on top of one another and who may or may not have had COVID-19. We don’t know because there was no testing. We had staff in these shelters who, similarly with long-term care homes, were working part-time with no benefits and therefore having to work multiple jobs at multiple sites, potentially carrying the virus with them, just in the same way that it travelled between long-term-care homes.

What else was happening was that these were congregate settings where the residents couldn’t stay in them all day. They actually are kicked out to spend the day outside. So if they weren’t feeling well—and for the first couple of months, it was very cold—what were many of them doing? If they did sit down on benches in parks, they were getting ticketed. So what were they doing? They weren’t feeling well and they needed a place to sleep. Where were they sleeping? They were sleeping on the TTC. We know this for a fact—that there were people who we know were COVID-19-positive who were taking the TTC during the day to rest, to sleep, simply to have somewhere to put their heads down. These are the same TTC lines that people who were the essential workers in marginalized populations, in relatively impoverished neighbourhoods, were taking to get to the jobs where they were, frankly, your grocery workers, your PSWs and your other essential workers.

So the first takeaway here is that it’s not surprising to me that Toronto and the GTA cannot open—because you can see the problem. You can see how even when other areas of the province, where people have largely been able to self-isolate—places where people tend to drive around and don’t take public transit or rely on public transit in the same way—have been able to get on top of their COVID-19 rates. It’s not one whit surprising to me that this spread continues to happen in the GTA. But the other piece that’s so crucial to understand is that this is why the pandemic has particularly been affecting families who are primarily racialized and who live in relatively impoverished areas in the city. It’s particularly true of the northwest and the northeast of the city, but it is also relatively true in Beaches–East York. The neighbourhood of Crescent Town, the apartment buildings around Dawes Road towards the east of the riding has been extremely hard hit by the virus. It illustrates to me and it should illustrate to the government the extent to which equity and transit are intimately related, and so it’s crucial that you take equity into account when you are building and constructing new transit lines. That’s why some of the amendments that the opposition suggested would have gone such a long way to embedding equity into the practice of the building of these transit lines.

Again, I want to go back to the idea particularly of the community benefits agreements. These have been shown to be absolutely crucial in giving a leg up, particularly to young people, in the areas that I have been talking about. That can really help them to get experience, help them to get a paycheque, especially now, when so many have lost their jobs to COVID-19 and are now also very much worried about losing their housing as they have fallen behind on their rent.

It is particularly important with regard to the community bill of rights, so that community members who might not be able to have the ear of a government member, who don’t have the government’s cellphones, who can’t say, “Hey, can you stop this thing that’s really bothering me?” in the middle of the night—it’s really important that those folks be protected in every way, that the transparency of

the process and, again, the equity considerations be considered.

The point about the concern when building the line destroys a park or a playground but Metrolinx, or the organization that it contracts with, isn't required to rebuild that park—that can have an enormous impact on the life of people who don't have backyards that their kids can play in, who don't have balconies and who don't have outdoor areas around their houses where their kids can play. So they need those parks. Those parks are really important. When there is nothing in these agreements that requires companies to rebuild and to make amends, that's a problem. It's an equity issue and something that I wish that you would reconsider.

The noise and vibration piece that my constituents have been experiencing: This is a piece that, I can tell you, you are going to be finding that constituents in other parts of the city are going to be experiencing. They are going to be coming at you if they can't get adequate responses from Metrolinx or from the companies doing the work, because it's terribly frightening and it's going to result in property damage. You are going to be living with the hue and cry that results from it.

In the last couple of minutes, I just want to say that I wish you would reconsider. I think the other issue with P3s is that they have the unfortunate result of taking public money out of the public sphere and into the private sphere. I want to say that one of the reasons that the Black Lives Matter demonstrations have been so loud is because what we've seen is a very large proportion of our very precious collective resources taken and put in a place that does not seem to a growing number of people to serve all of us. And so, that's a different topic to delve into, but the reason I mention it is because when you also take another chunk of those precious collective resources and you put them into the pockets of private companies instead of putting them towards our collective good, it adds to the anger that you are seeing in the world around you. I think, for your sakes, as well as for the sakes of all of us in Toronto, I would beg you to reconsider.

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The best use of our precious collective resources is to move ahead with a publicly supervised, transparent public process where money is spent on maintenance, operations and construction and that we get the lines that we choose to build and that we stick to them, and that we get them built in a public way, where we and the government are accountable for the construction and the equity in that construction of that transit and that we get it done as quickly as possible.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It's time for questions.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you to the member across from me.

St. Paul's Hospital is getting a \$1.9-billion replacement done in British Columbia. The NDP government is investing a lot in P3s in British Columbia. Why are you so

against P3s here in Ontario, but in British Columbia you're fine with them?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'm going to say that, again, if you look at the track record that P3s have had, it isn't very good. And it's not just this NDP party that is saying so. I think you will have heard a very fulsome account of the problems and the perils and why those exist, from both the member from University–Rosedale and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. I suggest that you go back and read Hansard carefully and then go and read the articles, as well as the Auditor General's report. Go and read them carefully. Read them before you ask yet another question that sounds like you haven't understood the points that were being made.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you very much for the presentation.

My question is around public-private partnerships. I think most people don't actually understand what they mean—but a public-private partnership would mean that the government would hire a private contractor to do the construction. But a P3 is when they hire a finance company to finance and control the construction project. That's where the Auditor General says that these projects cost up to 28% more than if the government were to actually finance and supervise the project themselves.

You brought up the equity issue and the need for greater investment in community supports. If this government is spending \$29 billion through a P3 on transit and 20% of that could be saved if the government supervised and financed it themselves, what would you do with the \$8 billion that could potentially be saved? Where would we invest those taxpayer dollars instead of spending it on some financial institution that's providing a P3 project?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: The thing is that that's exactly the point: You want to be able to save as much money as possible. You want to move as many people as you can and build as much transit as you can for as few dollars as possible.

I understand that theoretically it's a lovely idea to say that you transfer the risk of a problem, of the construction, onto a private company and then, that way, they're efficient and they build it more quickly. But history has proven that that isn't so. History has proven that the risk and the cost of that risk comes back onto the public purse and back onto the taxpayer. And so, in fact, all the things you could possibly spend it on, whether it's education or mental health or housing—to solve the problem of the 9,000 to 11,000 folks experiencing homelessness that we have in the GTA—you are then having to spend on financing. It doesn't make any sense whatsoever. It is a poor use of public dollars.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to ask the member across—I want to state something from the Auditor General that found the cost of AFP projects were \$8 billion higher, but this is not the net cost. In fact, the risks that were transferred to the private sector were valued at well

over \$8 billion, so they more than offset the high cost, resulting in a savings of approximately 60% of the project. Can you comment on that?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Beaches–East York for your response.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: You are going to know this riding so well, Speaker, by the time we're done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm getting to know it real well already.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: You should come and visit. It's a very beautiful place.

My answer to the member opposite is that if the Auditor General were as enamoured with P3 projects as he proposes, we would not be having this conversation here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Beaches–East York for bringing an equity lens to this discussion of transit. It is so incredibly important.

In my riding, London Transit cancelled fares when COVID-19 first hit, and that's resulted in a loss of \$12 million. It's also going to mean that transit in the future is going to change.

The question I would like to pose to you today is, why do you think that Metrolinx is not mandated to rebuild parks after they appropriate that land?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from—what was that riding again? Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you, Speaker.

It is an excellent question. Why isn't Metrolinx mandated to rebuild parks and other public amenities that it destroys? Surely, that is what the citizens of Ontario want.

And while we're talking about equity, I think it's really important to make the point that it's—one needs to fundamentally understand transit as a way of moving people from one area to another, which in and of itself is an equity issue. So any time you start to look at transit as a revenue generator, you're going to end up on the wrong end of the stick. I think that that's why at the moment there are TTC inspectors handing out enormous fines to the people who can least afford them. It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

We need to completely flip the way that all of us understand transit. It should be free, or as close to free as possible, and we should certainly not be charging people enormous fines—the people who can least afford it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I listened intently to the presentation, which I thought raised a lot of important points. I think what I'd like to see clarified for people here in the House and those who may be watching is the whole issue around the P3s—because you are right: The cost to doing P3s adds to the overall price tag of actually building the infrastructure. If that's the case, why would we want to go in that direction, especially considering that the Auditor

General has pointed out that it's quite a bit more expensive to be able to do it that way?

I'm wondering if you can just delve into that. What would be the motivations for wanting to go with a P3 model?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I think this is a profoundly important point to start to elucidate and to have everybody understand, because I'm sure that the public watching or paying attention to this issue—and if they're not paying attention to it now, they will be when transit ends up costing them way more money than it should and taking way longer yet again than it should and this does end up being the bill that extends transit agony once again in the city of Toronto.

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It's really important to understand that when governments persist in doing the thing that is going to make everything more expensive, people are going to ask what is going on here—and you have to ask, who is benefiting? If it's not the people of Ontario, who is benefiting? This is where I think that the member from Windsor–Tecumseh had it right. It's the individual companies and lobbyists, the private companies and lobbyists, that have the ear of the government, and shouldn't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

The member from Mississauga–Lakeshore, you have 25 seconds.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the member across is so against P3s, why is the Premier of British Columbia so in favour of P3s?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would be very interested in that question if I were an MPP in British Columbia, but I'm an MPP in Toronto, and I'm really concerned to represent my constituents. So I'm concerned with why the Premier of Ontario persists in pursuing P3s when they have been proven, over and over again, to be extremely problematic vehicles—pun intended—for the building of transit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act, an act that, if passed by this Legislature, would help deliver a transit system for the 21st century faster for the benefit of the people of the greater Toronto area.

Je suis heureuse de prendre la parole devant cette Assemblée aujourd'hui pour discuter du projet de loi 171 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun, une loi qui, si elle est adoptée par cette Assemblée, permettra de mettre en place plus rapidement un système de transport en commun pour le XXI^e siècle pour les habitants de la région du grand Toronto.

In June 2018, the people of Ontario voted overwhelmingly for a government committed to getting the province moving, and I'd like to congratulate the Minister of

Transportation, the Associate Minister of Transportation and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation for their hard work in making this bill a reality.

Each year, we lose billions of dollars due to gridlock. We are the government that will finally put an end to this problem and provide necessary relief for commuters. All levels of government support this plan and recognize the increasing demand for safe and reliable transportation options.

The Building Transit Faster Act targets steps in the planning, design and construction process that have unnecessarily delayed major projects in the past. If passed, the legislation would remove roadblocks and give the province the tools needed for Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario to deliver the following four priority transit projects faster within the committed time frames:

(1) The Ontario Line subway with 15 stations as early as 2027: The 15.5-kilometre Ontario Line will run between Exhibition-Ontario Place through downtown Toronto to the Ontario Science Centre, bringing rapid transit to neighbourhoods such as Liberty Village and Flemingdon Park. It will help address dangerous overcrowding and will provide needed relief on the TTC's Line 1 and at the Bloor-Yonge station.

(2) The Scarborough subway extension with three stations by 2029-30: The nearly eight-kilometre extension of TTC's Line 2, Bloor-Danforth, from the existing Kennedy station northeast to McCowan Road/Sheppard Avenue will improve transit access for the residents of Scarborough.

(3) The third project is the Yonge North subway extension, with approximately five stations by 2029-30. The 7.4-kilometre extension of TTC's Line 1, Yonge-University, will connect north from Finch station to Highway 7, connecting Toronto and Richmond Hill. That's going to be great news for my parents and some of my family members who live in Richmond Hill. They're very excited for that.

(4) The Eglinton Crosstown West extension is the fourth project, with multiple stops along the Eglinton West corridor by 2030-31. The western extension of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, future line 5, will increase connectivity along Eglinton Avenue, from the future Mount Dennis Station to Renforth Drive. Ultimately, through future phases of this project, the province is committed to establishing connectivity with Pearson International Airport.

Cette loi contribuera à accélérer la mise en place du transport en commun :

(1) relocaliser les services publics de manière plus efficace tout en traitant les entreprises de manière équitable et en veillant à ce que les coûts ne soient pas répercutés sur les consommateurs;

(2) faire en sorte que l'Ontario ait plus facilement accès aux terrains nécessaires à la construction de projets de transport en commun tout en traitant les propriétaires de manière équitable;

(3) garantir l'accès en temps voulu aux services municipaux et aux droits de passage;

(4) permettre à l'Ontario d'inspecter et d'enlever les obstacles physiques, tels que les arbres, sans la permission des propriétaires, mais avec une notification appropriée; et

(5) veiller à ce que les projets d'aménagement ou de construction à proximité n'interfèrent pas avec les quatre projets de métro prioritaires et ne les retardent pas.

In April 2019, the province announced its historic new transportation vision, with an estimated cost of \$28.5 billion. This includes four priority transit projects: the all-new Ontario Line, a three-stop Scarborough subway extension, the Yonge North subway extension and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension.

In June 2019, the Getting Ontario Moving Act was enacted to enable provincial ownership of the subway extensions and new lines envisioned in Ontario's new subway transit plan for the greater Toronto area. The proposed legislation includes steps to make the relocation of utilities, such as gas or electrical, more efficient by requiring their infrastructure to be moved within a set time frame and introduces a structured and consistent process for engaging and coordinating work.

Voici ce que disent les partenaires de l'industrie au sujet du projet de loi, Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun, une loi qui permettra de réaliser les quatre projets de métro prioritaires de l'Ontario dans les délais et les budgets impartis, afin que les personnes et les entreprises puissent disposer plus rapidement des transports en commun dont elles ont besoin.

« Nous nous engageons à fournir des services de transport en commun aussi efficaces et efficaces que possible, afin de permettre à un plus grand nombre de personnes de se déplacer plus rapidement. Il sera important de travailler en étroite collaboration avec nos partenaires municipaux afin de minimiser les perturbations et les désagréments pour les résidents dans ce sens. » Phil Verster, président et chef de la direction, Metrolinx.

« Nous nous réjouissons de travailler avec nos partenaires des secteurs public et privé pour réaliser ces projets prioritaires de transport en commun de manière efficace et responsable. La rationalisation des processus qui entraînent de fréquents retards contribuera à réduire les risques, à contrôler les coûts et à accélérer la réalisation de nouveaux projets de transport en commun. » Ehren Cory, président et chef de la direction, Infrastructure Ontario.

Here's what industry partners are saying about the proposed Building Transit Faster Act, legislation that will help deliver Ontario's four priority subway projects on time and on budget, ensuring that people and businesses get the transit they need sooner:

"Building transit more quickly is a key priority, not just for the business community but for residents as well. Clearing unnecessary roadblocks to ensure key transit projects are delivered on time and on budget is critical"—Jan De Silva, president and CEO, Toronto Region Board of Trade.

“LIUNA supports the accelerated transit proposal that will help expedite the much-needed transit infrastructure on time, on schedule and on budget. Cost certainty is essential to create confidence in the market which will translate into needed construction jobs for our workers”—Anthony Primerano, director of government relations, LIUNA.

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“I am encouraged by the provincial government’s move to streamline processes to build critical infrastructure and ensure priority transit projects like Yonge North subway extension are built on time, eliminating unnecessary and costly delays”—Mayor Frank Scarpitti, city of Markham.

The construction industry has identified several challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that could affect project timelines. We recognize these challenges and we are continuing to monitor the situation while pushing forward. That’s why, on June 11, the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation released comprehensive safety guidance for public transit agencies as the province reopens and more people return to work. This guidance, developed in consultation with health and transit officials, provides transit agencies with the information they need to help protect employees and passengers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Minister of Transportation said the following: “Although we are making steady progress to contain the virus, it still poses a serious health threat for everyone, especially our most vulnerable citizens. This guidance for transit agencies will provide consistent, clear and practical information that transit agencies can use to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep Ontarians moving safely.”

The guidance document provides transit agencies with best practices and tips to help stop the spread of COVID-19, such as maintaining physical distancing between people whenever possible; highly recommending that passengers wear face coverings or non-medical masks when taking transit; practising proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; installing physical barriers between drivers and passengers; using physical markers between seats; and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and objects.

The provincial transit agency, Metrolinx, has identified over 40 actions to help keep staff and passengers safe when riding GO trains, GO buses and the UP Express. These strategies include piloting health and safety kiosks that provide customers with tools and advice on how to stay safe; enhanced deep-cleaning processes for vehicles and in stations; providing hand sanitizer on every GO bus and in every station so passengers can apply it during their trip; and installing dividers for safety on GO trains and buses.

Metrolinx has also developed a comprehensive educational campaign called Safety Never Stops to inform passengers of safety tips on vehicles and platforms and in stations. This guidance is part of the work that Ontario and public health experts are doing to carefully monitor the key public health indicators as outlined in a framework to reopening our province.

Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario are continuing to advance projects on behalf of the province and pursuing alternative methods to engage with stakeholders and communities.

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

In keeping with our promise to build better public transit, we’ve introduced tools that are designed to get shovels in the ground on time and on budget, something that I think the member from Orléans would learn a lot from, given his past shared Ottawa experience.

Mr. Speaker, we’re going to get subways built quickly, which will help ensure that people and businesses get the transit they need sooner. On June 2, 2020, Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx issued two requests for qualifications for the Ontario Line through Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx. This marked the first step in the procurement process for the signature Ontario Line subway project, bringing us one step closer to our transit vision for the GTA.

Our plan will get these four subways built quicker and at lower cost than what has been done in the past. Our government is committed to doing these things differently. We understand what needs to be done to get shovels in the ground. Our plan will address the key challenges we face when trying to get transit built. We are going to get subways built quickly, which will help ensure that people and businesses get the transit they need sooner. We are actively working to identify barriers that cause delays, and building from lessons learned.

Our government, again, is committed to doing things differently. We know what needs to be done to get transit built faster. Political squabbling has prevented big projects from being built for decades, and I’m pleased that we’ve arrived at a point where all three levels of government agree that the time is now to get subways built.

We’ve cut through political gridlock through our landmark partnership with the city of Toronto, and I look forward to continuing to collaborate with our municipal and federal counterparts to keep our four priority projects moving forward.

Our plan will address the key challenges we face when trying to get transit built. We’re going to get subways built quickly, which will ensure that people and businesses get the transit they need sooner. These are examples of various tools and processes being used around the world to accelerate public infrastructure.

The Réseau électrique métropolitain act introduced specific land assembly rules for a 67-kilometre rapid transit system in the greater Montreal area in an effort to reduce delays in acquiring property for the project.

British Columbia introduced a Significant Projects Streamlining Act, which allowed the government to streamline processes and use new tools to advance projects designated as provincially significant.

We haven’t modelled our approach after any single jurisdiction. Instead, we looked at what other places have

done and took the best ideas to develop a strategy for these four subway projects. We've taken the lessons learned from projects in Ontario and around the world to ensure that we have the best strategy to get projects built sooner.

Thanks again to the minister, associate minister and parliamentary assistant for all their hard work on this bill. That is why I am pleased not only to speak to Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act, but also to vote in favour of it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now time for questions.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is the one that we were discussing towards the end of the time that I gave a presentation. I'd be very interested in hearing the member opposite's response. Why, given all the issues that P3s have, and why, given the opposition and the concerns of the Auditor General and the concerns that we've raised about the fact that P3s end up taking public money and funnelling it into private companies, does the member opposite believe the government is still going ahead with that model?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I was actually a part of the committee on public accounts with the Auditor General. I was part of that hearing. So I'm intimately aware of what was going on and what that whole situation was about.

The Auditor General has made it very clear that she is not here to discuss policy; she's simply here to look at the numbers. So that's what she did. For the member to imply that the Auditor General has questioned the policy behind P3s I think is inappropriate, and I would invite the member to go back and refer to what the Auditor General actually stated, not only in her report but also in public hearings.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: To carry on that conversation, the Auditor General clearly stated that the P3 projects that the government of Ontario had taken on over the last 10 years had cost an additional \$8 billion. I don't know whether that's a policy or an economic statement, but it's a clear economic statement and it has policy implications.

The policy implication is that in the future, the governments shouldn't be looking at P3 models because they cost taxpayers more in the long run and they give taxpayers less control of the projects. We're seeing that right now with the Ottawa LRT and with the Eglinton East LRT. Over and over, P3 projects are failures. The question, again, to the member opposite is, why is this government advocating for or pursuing a P3 model for the transit expansion?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for his question. To respond, P3s continue to be highly successful in Ontario. As Minister Scott has publicly stated, Ontario remains committed to the P3 program. In fact, we recently rolled out the biggest pipeline of P3 projects in Ontario history.

Where project risks can be identified and quantified early in the procurement process, a fixed-price P3 model, like design, build and finance, or design, build, finance and maintain, is an effective tool to transfer risks to the private sector to manage in a fixed-price contract.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I wanted to ask my colleague—I know she is championing a lot of local transit projects in her riding—if she can just speak to how important this piece of legislation is to the whole transit vision and goal in her region?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for her question. This legislation is absolutely critical. As you can tell from what's happened in Ottawa, the city clearly messed up. It's unfortunate that it happened this way. We've seen similar situations, I think, in Toronto, as well.

I think the fact that we're now uploading the Toronto transit infrastructure to the province is going to provide more accountability and more oversight. That's something that our government campaigned on, something that we all campaigned on as well: providing more transparency and accountability. I think that model could also be very effective for future projects in the city of Ottawa, because currently right now this was all done through the city, through the city councillors. The member from Orléans was chair of the transit commission when those closed-door decisions were being made. There's no accountability, and it's unfortunate that it has led to this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Jamie West: I also want to thank the member from Carleton for her comments during the debate.

Starting at 9 a.m. this morning and then continuing through the afternoon, our critic, the member for University-Rosedale, went through a summary of the 33 amendments that we had to improve the bill. There were 33 amendments brought forward by the NDP to improve this bill and make the bill better, more solid. Every single one of those 33 amendments was voted down.

I'm trying to understand, from the government's point of view, in what world would any bill be so perfect that not one of 33 amendments could improve that bill?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I can't respond as to why the committee would have voted against those amendments because I wasn't there, but I have faith in my colleagues and I have faith in the committee process. Committees are meant to be neutral; they're meant to be impartial. It's meant to be an involved and open debate and investigation. So if those amendments were voted down, I'm sure it's because the people and the members who voted them down thought that they would not actually improve and in fact would pull everything behind and worsen the situation. So if you are wondering why those amendments weren't voted on, it's probably because they were not helpful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: A couple of those amendments were things that would make it more difficult for a safety inspection to be done and for a pre-inspection to be done. Why would someone introduce something that would make it more difficult to do a safety inspection and consider that to be a good amendment to the bill?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for his question. Again, I can't speak for what individual members decide what they want to or don't want to do, but I can say with confidence that there is a reason that our party is in government. We've always been open, accountable, transparent. Our plans make sense. People have faith in us and they trust us. I personally can't understand why someone thinks that making safety inspections harder is an improvement to a bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is, given that Metrolinx has an absolutely terrible history in terms of being untransparent and opaque, why does the member believe that measures to make the process more equitable and more transparent are not worth taking on?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm a little confused by the member's question, because if Metrolinx was unaccountable and not transparent, then the Auditor General wouldn't have had the opportunity to audit them. So I think the fact that she was able to include them in their audit indicates that they are accountable and transparent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Let's have more questions. Let's recognize the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges—there's another part to that.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Richmond Hill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Richmond Hill. I knew that.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question to my colleague—great speech, by the way; I heard every word. I want to talk about why, from the first day I arrived here, I talked about the importance of bringing subways to Richmond Hill because the people of Richmond Hill have been asking us time and again. I know your family resides in Richmond Hill, so you would understand how important it is for this subway to be built after many years of neglect by the previous government. You'd understand that.

I want to ask you specifically why you think it's so important for us to now continue on this. Even despite COVID-19 being there, the importance—because we made a promise to people and people expect that. Now you're getting a subway that's going to be built and built faster. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Let's go back to the member from Carleton one more time.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to thank the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for his question. It's a very important topic. I might not live in Richmond Hill right now, but I certainly grew up there. I actually went to high school there, Bayview Secondary School. I lived in Richmond Hill when I went to university, and I had to commute. Back in those days, if I wanted to commute from my house to my university in Scarborough, it would take me two hours because I'd have to walk, then get on a bus and transfer, then go down all the way to Finch and get on. The area and population have continually grown since then, and traffic has become worse.

So the few times that I do go visit my parents, Mr. Speaker, and I want to come to the Legislature the next day, in order to be here for 9 a.m., I have to leave the house at 6 a.m. if I want to drive down. I have to leave at 6 a.m.

This is why subways are critical. I've wanted them for years. My family has wanted them for years. I know everyone in Richmond Hill is thrilled to have subways, and that's why we're pushing forward despite COVID-19.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today and to add the voice of my constituents to this bill, although this is, as you can well imagine, a very Toronto-specific bill.

I'd like to expand on the comments from the member from Windsor–Tecumseh who was talking about the problems with the P3 model. Now, he referred to the Auditor General's report, and I'd like also expand on some of the ideas found therein. The Auditor General found that every single one of Infrastructure Ontario's P3 projects was justified on the basis that they transferred the risk to the private sector. Unfortunately, that's not true. As it turns out, there was no evidence, no data to prove that claim.

That's very much a tremendous concern because when you look at the P3 model, part of the people who are trying to sell this model say, "Well, there's going to be very little risk for the public sector. Private companies will shoulder the risk, and that will be sort of a motivation for them to work hard, be on time and to make sure that costs don't overrun." But when the public is the one footing the bill, we know that doesn't necessarily happen. Also I do wonder if math is indeed a Conservative strong suit, because in P3s, math is something that is really not obeyed.

In terms of the risks that are calculated within P3s, Infrastructure Ontario and the analysis of these will rely on what's known as double counting, and there are other inappropriate calculations. So consulting firms that analyze or present these business cases and the value-for-money assessments will often go and take something and count it twice or overestimate the risk. This is a huge and tremendous concern. Is this something that is actually analyzed by a proper consulting firm? Not always the case.

We know that overruns, according to the Auditor General, amounted to \$8 billion. That is a tremendous number; that is a huge number. Even something running over cost in the amount of \$1 million should be something that concerns the government, yet we have this history. We have this understanding. We have the Ontario government seeing the flaws of what it has done before, and yet this new government is running head first into yet another financial nightmare. It makes me truly wonder.

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Also, we need to think about what it means to be in business. Often, when we hear about the wonders of the private sector, we hear that there is competition, that this competition will drive down price, and that it will be the best thing since sliced bread and you'll end up with this

wonderful product. But unfortunately, in Ontario we know that there aren't that many P3 contractors. There is very little competition among them. Actually, five of them got over 80% of Infrastructure Ontario projects. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh quite rightly pointed out that many of these P3 contracts simply amount to sending money over the Atlantic. We should be looking at solutions that are, as this government would say, made in Ontario. We should also be looking at companies that are based in Ontario.

We also know that—we believe the private system will always be a bit of competition—there's also no monitoring or reporting on P3s. If there are minor deficiencies, on average they take about 13 months to resolve. That is three times the maximum time allowed. That's not competitive. That's not good business. Many of them are still in dispute after years and years.

Another concern—and this should strike at our legislative hearts—is that Infrastructure Ontario was unable to provide the Auditor General signed conflict-of-interest declarations. How does that not raise red flags? People in the industry, we have to be concerned about, because they have shifted back and forth between the private sector and P3 agencies. We have to wonder: Is there transparency? Is there accountability?

Also we have to concern ourselves with the metrics that are used to evaluate. Infrastructure Ontario wanted to change the methodology by which the P3 model or procurement model was based. They wanted to manipulate that to make that more biased towards P3s and to exaggerate the cost of projects funded and operated by the public sector. That has to be a tremendous concern. One might ask the question: Do you have a student evaluate their own work? Likely not—although, the students I've worked with in my past, I know that they were honourable and upright. But when it comes to doing business, if it comes down to money, I don't know that people necessarily comport themselves with the greatest amount of honour.

We also have to take a look—and this makes me remember my school years as well. Infrastructure Ontario pays out the P3 companies even if they're unsuccessful. So that means there is really very little cost to them. They will pay up to \$2 million to cover their costs of putting in a bid. Is that not shocking to you? Is not the cost of doing business that risk? They should foot the bill for the bid, and if they end up being successful, all the power to them. That's wonderful. They can complete the project and they can make money. But for the government to hand out money just for showing up? That's like having a race and just saying, "Everybody gets a ribbon."

We also have to think about the fact that P3 models always privilege big business. Small and medium-sized businesses do not benefit much under this model. Also, in the assessment, P3 companies and agencies—many are charged with assessing other P3 projects. How does that make any sense?

In value-for-money assessments, this is where transparency and accountability ought to come into play. But these

business cases are hidden. They're often kept secret, and the excuse to do this is pretty obvious. They say, "Business confidentiality," but some might posit that that's actually a cover for accounting and bias.

Some of the things that are kept secret within this business case are the assumptions on risk transfer, also, the costs that politicians will commit taxpayers to by signing these agreements for decades to come.

Another concern with these projects is that oftentimes, by the time they're completed, that government is long since gone. You heard us all today. We're all talking about the Harris years and the filling of the subway. A lot of people tend to forget, and I know that that this government probably hopes that people would forget that.

For this government, which is always pointing their finger towards the past Liberal government, we should take a look toward the past Liberal government's response to the AGO's report. At first, they were incredibly defensive. They were horrified at this. They'd been exposed. They'd been shown to be wastrels of money—which they were, and are—and they really didn't do anything to account for all of the Auditor General's findings. As it turns out, in Canada, Manitoba is only the province on the books that has clear laws governing P3s.

We also want to take a look at this notion of, as I've discussed before, risk: the risk that either the public sector will take in creating these projects or the private sector will take on—or pretend to take on and put back on the public. Part of the Auditor General's findings were that the risks were estimated to be about five times higher than if they proceeded with P3s. That was the argument. But the risks assumed and transferred through Ontario's P3s have averaged about 50% of their capital cost, some close to 100% of their capital cost. How is that even possible? As the report notes, there is no data and no evidence to support those claims.

Even consultants such as Deloitte have gone on record. They've confirmed that the probabilities and cost impacts are not based on any empirical data, but rather on someone's judgment and experience. That doesn't sound like a sound business case to me. Some would also even indicate that these assumptions about risk transfer are just pulled out of the air, that they're fabricated by external consultants.

Another concern is yet another risk, which is asset residual value. This has a very problematic assumption involved in it. That assumption is that the asset would be in better condition at the end of the P3 if it were managed by a private company than if it were managed by the public. That's pretty questionable, and that's a very strange assumption. How is it possible that the private sector will suddenly keep the facility up to standard, up to code? There's no indication that that is the case. Perhaps they want to make more money on the maintenance and the repair of said assets.

As we've discussed before, risks are rarely transferred to the private sector. The risk always resides with the public. So the number one excuse for using the P3 model is actually invalid. P3 projects always have something in

them meaning that larger companies can walk away from the project at any time and all they will risk is simply the equity they've put into the project, which is around 10% to 15% of the cost of the project. But the problem here is that the government will remain liable. It will have to pay out at high rates of interest. We know this from the past Liberal government with the gas plant scandal. Who remembers that? Remember? It was estimated at a certain amount, and then the cost kept going up and up and up. It amounted to about \$1 billion.

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When I think of P3s, I almost think of a fishing story, because we know that what is in reality is often reported to be something so much bigger. Infrastructure Ontario's estimated costs for projects are about 30% higher than the actual contracted cost. These projects are put forward, and the justification is that there is more of a discipline on detailed costings, but their estimates are incredibly off. IO and other P3 companies inflate their cost estimates. They want to get those bids in at those levels so that later they can go ahead and claim, "Look, we've delivered the project. It's under cost. It's under budget." But really that's a huge concern, because (1) it's not true and (2) it indicates that the government is willing to pay more for something than it's actually worth. That has to raise serious red flags.

We have a new licence plate. It says, "Ontario: A Place to Grow," but it really should say "Ontario: It's Who You Know." When five of these large companies are awarded 80% of the P3 projects, how does that not raise red flags? That is not competition, that is not transparent and that is not accountable. We have to take a look at the P3 process, its methodology and its value-for-money assessments, as well as the entire nature of the project itself.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh talked about a history lesson. We should have learned from what P3s have done. Whether it's the gas plant scandal or whether it's the \$8 billion the Auditor General found in cost overruns: That's a tremendous amount of money. We should be, as governments, wise stewards of the public purse. We should be looking carefully at how money is spent. And if something is a cost overrun, even in the millions, that should be a grave cause for concern, and someone should have to answer for that. Yet we have this history in Ontario of simply letting the books run over, and for there really to be little or few consequences.

I also wanted to think about this idea of value for money. I think about my riding of London North Centre. There is a festival that happens every year called Sunfest. It is amazing. It gets talent from all across Canada. It's amazing. It's also international. It's world-renowned. It is truly phenomenal, but it also brings in that value for money. It contributes \$4.5 million of economic activity and it brings in \$3.5 million just to the city of London. Visitors book in the neighbourhood of 3,500 hotel rooms, but that also benefits the province. It brings in a \$2.1-million boost to the provincial GDP and \$390,000 to provincial tax revenues. Unfortunately, this year Sunfest did not receive a Celebrate Ontario grant. It's shocking.

They showed the money and they showed how this benefits the province, and yet the province didn't see the value. I'd like them to reconsider.

I also heard a member earlier talking about certain cash-for-access scandals. I also think about an event that happened in my city. This was in 2019. We knew that the federal election was upcoming. The Prime Minister at the time, Justin Trudeau, decided to visit London. Now, at this event, typically all the politicians organize and we all say our happy, kind words about the event. But Justin Trudeau would not attend the event unless he was the only one allowed to speak—the only one. He effectively silenced every single other person and then got up and talked about equity and diversity, when he was the only voice talking. I mean, it is beyond belief.

But when I think about cash-for-access, I have to consider that this event just happened to coincide with a Liberal fundraising event that same night.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Yes, so therefore the taxpayers of Canada paid for the Prime Minister, all of his security, all of his travel costs and everything necessary for him to come to a fundraising event, because he stopped at a community event first. That should raise questions.

You know, we have to take a look at the P3 model. We understand the history of them. The Auditor General has been clear: 74 cases of cost overruns, \$8 billion that has been wasted. We take a look at how this pandemic has shaken this province, how it has decimated businesses and families. That money would be very well spent at this current time.

I urge this government to look carefully at Bill 171. Take a look at the 33 amendments that were summarily rejected. I'd like to think that the government has also considered its own words: that it wants to work with the opposition. Working with the opposition means listening to wise counsel, and it means looking at those amendments with an open mind, and not simply shutting them down out of partisan anger.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It's time for questions. I recognize the member from Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's nice to hear the member from London North Centre—great town, the city you represent. It's my old alma mater, so I definitely love your town.

I will take issue, though, with your concerns about P3s. Just so you're aware, 95% of P3s are on budget; 70% are on time. The University of Melbourne has said—I think you were asking about third-party opinions—"54 projects" in Australia "showed ... only 1 per cent went over budget; they also beat the schedule on average by 3 per cent, while traditional approaches were on average 24 per cent late."

McKinsey says "a growing body of evidence supports the assertion that" P3s "can indeed solve many structural and operational problems that cause budget and schedule overruns ... we find that the P3 approach can reduce life cycle costs up to 20 per cent compared to the traditional approach."

So my question to you is—here in Ontario, we have this great organization called Infrastructure Ontario. The world is coming to Ontario from Germany, from Europe, from Asia. They're coming here to see all the great work we do here—governments and infrastructure. Why is it you're against P3s if the world is coming here? We have such a great organization in Ontario working so well.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you very much to the member from Oakville for his comments. I'm so glad you recognize the amazingness that is London North Centre.

You know, I'd also just like to turn to the language that the member himself has used. He used words such as "could" and "can." Those are not assertions of actual fact; those are simply possibilities.

I would like to refer, not to Australia, but to Ontario in 2014 with the Auditor General's findings of cost overruns—tremendous cost overruns. You talk about the world coming to Ontario. Perhaps they just want a piece of the pie that other governments are so willing to send off to multinational corporations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'm curious to know from my colleague: With this model having been so severely discredited, what does the member think it's going to take for it to no longer be used so that we're no longer sending public money off to private companies?

1720

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you very much to my colleague from Beaches–East York for the question. I wish I had the answer. I wish I had the magic bullet or something to help governments understand that P3 models are never something that will result in cost savings, quality or any sort of confidence.

The model has been discredited, and we know that the Liberals before tried to manipulate the methodology used to evaluate them, but the Conservatives are just more than willing to continue that coalition with the government prior. They say one thing, but they do another. We see that Liberal, Tory, it's the same old story.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Many members have mentioned concerns about better planning. I would like to share important research conducted by Western's Ivey Business School in 2015, comparing traditional procurement and the P3 approach. Based on the case studies, they found that the overall cost of traditional projects more than doubled. Scope and design changes result in a significant increase in final project size.

Speaker, my question is to the member for London North Centre. Why is he opposed to the methods that have proven to provide better planning and increased accountability, methods that will bring long-needed transit to Ontario faster?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Again, when we take a look at the P3 model that is being evaluated, the problem with this is that P3 companies who deliver these sorts of works are the ones that end up evaluating other companies.

There's a problem with assessment. There is a problem that Deloitte has similarly pointed out, that this is not based on empirical data.

I think it is important that we return to the Auditor General's report—not what could be or can be or what might be, but that we take a look at the hard facts. The hard facts are that P3s have failed in 74 projects. That cannot be denied.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: This side.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): This side. That's right. I saw you. The member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In your comments—and thank you very much for your speech today—you mentioned the Liberal gas plant scandal, which cost Ontario taxpayers \$2 billion. You mentioned the Ottawa LRT, which is a P3 fiasco. You mentioned the Eglinton East LRT, and earlier we heard that the initial cost estimate for the Eglinton East LRT was going to be \$4.5 billion and now it's \$12.5 billion. You mentioned the Auditor General's report that says that P3 funding models cost Ontario taxpayers an additional \$8 billion. Do you foresee, in a few years, another debate in this House about the P3 procurement of transit made by the Conservative government of this province?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I think we should mark our calendars and count on it. If this is something that proceeds, we know there will be cost overruns. We know there will be problems with delivery. We know there will be problems with timing. It is just simply in the cards for the P3 model.

Until we adopt a program whereby the risk is placed solely upon the private sector, then governments should not stick their necks out. Instead, we see governments that are willing to risk taxpayer money. They're not risking their own necks; they're risking all of the taxpayers' money. It must not matter much to government when you're spending somebody else's money.

But here, on the side of the NDP, we care about people's money. We want to make sure it's spent in the most effective and frugal way, one that achieves its desired ends, not lining the pockets of some insider friends.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: We agree with the Auditor General about the \$8 billion in extra costs financing a P3 model. We acknowledge that. But what you must foresee is all the savings, many billions of dollars more, from transfer of risk to the private sector—that they are best able to deal with all the cost overruns.

Look at British Columbia, where your government is in charge there. They're using P3s for the Broadway subway, the Burnaby Hospital, the Cariboo Memorial Hospital, the Lions Gate Hospital—and I could go on, pages and pages. What is so different between British Columbia's NDP and your NDP here?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now we'll go back to the member from London North Centre for your response.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, I'm thrilled. The government is listening. What I've been talking about is the private sector carrying all the risk. I'm so glad that you agree with that, and I'm glad that this will be reflected in the legislation, because that is something that the BC government has. It is a government-controlled organization. It is monitored effectively, and the private sector carries all the risk. Thank you. Well done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I guess my question to the member for London North Centre is a pretty simple one. We know from the auditor that it costs more money in order to go the way of P3s. For years, Ontario, as other provinces, has built all kinds of infrastructure. We built hospitals, we built schools, municipal buildings, all kinds, and we've done it by us being the financiers, putting the money forward, and then hiring a general contractor in order to do the design and build and then get the project done. It's much cheaper to do it that way because we're not paying a third party to do what the government is able to do with IO.

So as was said earlier, IO is one of the world leaders when it comes to being able to manage these projects. If we're a leader in being able to manage projects, why would we give P3s that work when we can do it ourselves?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Absolutely. The problem with P3 models as well is that we're not just talking about the building, but we're talking about the ongoing maintenance, and that's a huge concern. Let's take a look at Highway 407. How much did that cost the public? And then it was sold off. This has to be a huge concern for this government. This is revenue that is simply going out the door. As the member from Timmins has rightly said, Infrastructure Ontario is well equipped and able to deliver. So why are we in the thrall of these private companies, where ostensibly the money might end up going back overseas? We need to make sure that we are spending money here in Ontario and spending money on Ontario companies.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There isn't enough time for an additional question. Therefore, further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise briefly and speak to the Building Transit Faster Act. I did speak a bit about transit when I was first elected to this place, about how important it was to communities like mine, who have been waiting for many, many years in order to get transit built.

We've made a lot of progress on that front. I have two-way, all-day GO train service to parts of my riding that never had it before, and that is something I know the people in my community—the people of Markham in particular—are very excited about. We've seen transit

improvements in Stouffville in terms of the GO transit system, which is something that we're also very excited about. I know it's not specific to this bill, but we have an expansion of Highway 404 that is progressing very, very rapidly and will open up soon, which will also help traffic flow in the community.

There are a lot of good things that are happening in the community. I noted earlier that that the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane was excited about a bypass that the government announced for his community. So we are doing a lot of good work as a government in order to get people moving.

This bill is very exciting for a number of reasons. It allows us to move quicker to get shovels in the ground, and, more important than getting shovels in the ground, to actually get transit built across the GTA—because, as we know, the GTA is extraordinarily important to the economic well-being of the province of Ontario and, by extension, I would suggest, to the entire country. Thousands of jobs and opportunities are dependent on us being able to build transit effectively and faster.

The model that we've chosen, I think, is a very important model, and it will get the job done, a job that we've been waiting so long to have done. One of the good things about this—and we've seen this in other transit builds across the province—is all of the other things that come with transit. Colleagues, you'll know that as we build transit—I saw it in Markham as we started to announce two-way, all-day GO train service, around the new stations or the all-day hubs. We started to see the construction of—whether it was condos, which is great for people who want to live and work in the same area. But we also saw a lot of commercial opportunity in that, small businesses that were able to come into a community as a result of the changes or as a result of increasing construction of transit and transportation.

1730

We're seeing that here. One of the things that we're very excited about—I know the member from Willowdale and the member from Don Valley North both talked about the extraordinary opportunities that will come with the Ontario Line. Those opportunities include not only new homes, but also small, medium and sometimes large enterprises that come, that follow that.

We do know now—not to stray too far—that a lot of these small and medium enterprises that are located in the province of Ontario have had a difficult time since COVID-19. They've had a difficult time. We saw that in the construction, for instance, along Eglinton, and we've taken up that challenge. I would suggest that the challenges that COVID-19 has given us with respect to our small and medium enterprises that are located in some of these commercial properties that have sprung up as a result of the transit and transportation that comes from these bills are something that we're addressing today.

I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced a very important bill earlier today, which I think really is very important when you talk about increasing transit and transportation opportunities. When

you talk about the bill, this is very important because we need a healthy, vibrant, strong private enterprise to locate in many of these new properties that will be existing after the build, and we've seen the excitement that is being generated by these different Ontario lines. So I was excited when the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced that bill. I thought it was very timely with this particular piece of legislation right now, given that the Legislature has been seized with COVID-19 issues for many, many months. I thought it was two good pieces of legislation.

I just wanted to—again, not to stray too far, Mr. Speaker, but I wanted to make it clear. As I said, the minister introduced a very important bill today on this, and to be clear—I know there has been some confusion. I know the member for Waterloo, perhaps—she was at a meeting that we had today. Now, to be even more clear, this was a meeting that was requested by the NDP at 12:30 or so on and so forth. They sent a letter to my office and we arranged a schedule so that we could meet and hear them out.

But what is important—and I wanted to suggest this: There has been some suggestion by members of the official opposition—and I know the member from Waterloo will probably want to correct the record a little bit later on—that somehow the Liberals and the Greens were supportive of the legislation that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced today. That's actually not correct. They were supportive of moving forward with debate on this bill today, which was something that was clarified at the emergency meeting that the NDP asked for. It was clarified. So I was very surprised when, a couple of hours later—not even a couple of hours later; I think about 60 minutes later—the member for Waterloo issued a press release claiming that, after having sat in this meeting with us and after having heard from the House leader for the Liberal Party and the leader of the Green Party, that in fact they supported advancing debate on this bill tonight and would support unanimous consent. I was surprised that the NDP then went down that path afterwards.

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: You hear the member for Waterloo starting to get personal, as the NDP often do, right, colleagues? You know what happens. There is no bar that they won't sink to, Mr. Speaker.

I will say this: The NDP, of course, walked away from the table on this, as they have done the entire time that we've been trying to deal with COVID-19-related issues. They decided to walk away from the table. The leader of the Green Party and the House leader from the Liberal Party did stay at the table and did negotiate very hard, as they have done often.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: To be clear, they didn't get everything they had asked for; in fact, they didn't get the majority of the things they had asked for. They had,

though, fought very hard to get an extension backdated to May 1 when the government had decided on June 3. We did agree to that. But to be clear, the government did not move beyond that. We did hear a lot that came out of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs with respect to why this initiative was important.

One of the reasons, again, why I think it's so important that we have an opportunity to debate that bill at the same time that we're debating transit and transportation is because—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. The member from Hamilton Mountain, second time.

I'm going to encourage the government House leader to bring the conversation back around to the bill we have been debating so that we can continue with debate.

I don't expect any further disruption from anyone in this Legislature at this point in time. We've got a job to do. Let's do it peacefully, let's do it quietly and let's get on with business.

Back to the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, sir. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the reason why I think it's so important that we have the opportunity—and I'm excited that we have the opportunity to debate the minister's bill on protecting commercial tenancies at the same time that we're discussing transit and transportation in the GTA—is because we heard at the Standing Committee on Finance how important it was that the government do something and that the government make some moves to protect small and medium commercial enterprises.

Again, why is that important in a commercial context? We've seen this across the province. When you build transit and transportation along those corridors, what happens is, people start to come. They start to build. Whether it's condos or whether it's commercial buildings, they come and they want to be around that transit and transportation. That's why this model that we've chosen, which will allow us to expedite and get it done quicker, is so exciting.

We've heard about the P3 model. The P3 model will allow us to get this transit in the ground faster so that we can have this—and you hear it from the municipalities, like the city of Toronto, that this is going to be great for revenue for them. They're going to be getting more property taxes and at the higher level, because it's going to be commercial tenancies that will come in along a lot of these routes. It's coincidental, but it's actually really good that these two things are happening at the same time. I know that the members opposite would want the record to be very clear on that.

As I've said a lot of times in this House during the COVID-19 debate, all the opposition has been very fierce in their advocacy for the things they think are important to their constituents and to the people of Ontario. That has not changed. Whether it's transit and transportation, which went through committee—and a lot of people have been presenting to committee.

I know that one of the things that we said when we came back is that we want to give a lot of time at committee. A lot of these committees have been undersubscribed. We've been able to give a day back to the Legislature with these bills much quicker because of the vast amount of support we're getting from the people of Ontario.

But to suggest that when members of the opposition agree to move something forward, to have debate on a topic—I think that is just as reflective of how hard people are working during this COVID-19 crisis. Sometimes we all have to give a little in order to get where we want the people of the province of Ontario to be. They did that, and by doing that, you sometimes have to do it at the table. That's why, for instance, when you talk about this bill moving transit faster—again, I don't want to rehash many of the things I've just said, but in speaking with some of the elected officials in my community—because as you know, Mr. Speaker, part of this will be coming into York region.

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The member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill has been fighting for as long as I've known him with respect to the expansion of the Yonge subway line. He will know the amount of activity that will be generated along that line, and mostly in commercial tenancies, which is very, very exciting for the Richmond Hill community, and it's very exciting for York region because we need that assessment into our communities. But as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, and as members who are on the standing committee have heard, in order to guarantee that you have the people to fill those spaces in a post-COVID-19 environment, we have to do more to protect those who will be occupants of these tenancies. You can do that by protecting people today.

The original bill that we sent forward with respect to that, which comes into this transit, was—admittedly, the government had decided on June 3 to protect commercial tenancies. After having received some advice from the official opposition and, again, having sat down with the independent members, the Liberals and the Greens, we heard their advocacy and we were able to move that back to May 1, and we're moving forward with the debate with their support. I have no idea how any of the opposition members are going to vote on this, on the bill that hopefully we'll debate after this, but I'm excited by the fact that these two bills are emerging at the same time.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask for unanimous consent for the following:

I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the expedited passage of Bill 192, An Act to amend the Commercial Tenancies Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the expedited passage of Bill 192, An Act to amend the Commercial Tenancies Act. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House,

the order for second reading of Bill 192, An Act to amend the Commercial Tenancies Act, may be called today; and

When that order is called, 120 minutes shall be allotted to the debate on the motion for second reading of the bill, divided equally among the government, official opposition and independent members as a group, at the end of which time, the Speaker shall interrupt and put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

At such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading and the order for third reading of Bill 192 shall then immediately be called and the question shall immediately be put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Calandra has moved that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, the order for second reading of Bill 192, An Act to amend the Commercial Tenancies Act, may be called today; and

When that order is called, 120 minutes shall be allotted to the debate on the motion for second reading of the bill, divided equally among the government, official opposition and independent members as a group, at the end of which time, the Speaker shall interrupt and put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

At such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading and the order for third reading of Bill 192 shall then immediately be called and the question shall immediately be put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the government House leader for the continuing of debate.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I've got a few minutes left, so I will begin closing this portion of the debate by, again, just congratulating both the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation for their hard work that has got us here—and really, for the vision of the Premier, who had said that it was very, very important that we get transit, that we get subways built even faster. He pushed this for all of us. We didn't know that we could get it done as quickly as we're going to get it done. COVID-19 has also highlighted the fact that we need to move quickly on this. We need to get people working again, colleagues. We need to make sure that our communities can grow and they can thrive. That's what this is all about.

Again, I just want to take one very, very brief moment to apologize to both the leader of the Green Party and the leader of the Liberal Party if there was any—it was certainly not our intention to suggest that they were supportive of the bill; more that they were supportive of moving forward with unanimous consent to debate the bill tonight. So I unreservedly apologize to them for that mistake and thank them for never leaving the table, for continuing to

work on behalf of their constituents. Even if they weren't able to get all that they asked for, we were able to at least, I think, make the bill a bit better.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Calandra has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Carried on division.

Third reading debate adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
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Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
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