

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

HE-24

Journal des débats (Hansard)

HE-24

Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy

Estimates

Ministry of Infrastructure

Ministry of Transportation

Comité permanent du patrimoine, de l'infrastructure et de la culture

Budget des dépenses

Ministère de l'Infrastructure

Ministère des Transports

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Wednesday 7 June 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mercredi 7 juin 2023

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

Hansard on the Internet

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

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

Index inquiries

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

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

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

Renseignements sur l'index

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

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



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

ISSN 2816-7252

CONTENTS

Wednesday 7 June 2023

Estimates	HE-533
Ministry of Infrastructure	HE-533
Hon. Kinga Surma	
Mr. Michael Lindsay	
Mr. Bruce Singbush	
Mr. Michael Robertson	
Ms. Carlene Alexander	
Ministry of Transportation	HE-552
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	
Mr. Felix Fung	
Mr. Doug Jones	
Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness	
Mr. Jonathan Lebi	
Mr. Eric Doidge	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,
INFRASTRUCTURE
AND CULTURAL POLICY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DU PATRIMOINE,
DE L'INFRASTRUCTURE
ET DE LA CULTURE**

Wednesday 7 June 2023

Mercredi 7 juin 2023

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

ESTIMATES

MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order.

We are here for consideration of the 2023-24 expenditure estimates referred to this committee. Members may ask a wide range of questions pertaining to the estimates before the committee. However, the onus is on the members asking the questions to ensure the question is relevant to the current estimates under consideration.

The ministries are required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues that they undertake to address. If you wish, you may, at the end of your appearance, verify the questions and issues being tracked with the legislative research officer.

We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. And as always, all comments should go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin?

The first ministry scheduled for consideration is the Ministry of Infrastructure. I'm required to call vote 4001, which sets the review process in motion. We will begin with a statement of not more than 20 minutes from the Minister of Infrastructure.

Minister, welcome. You may begin.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you, Ms. Chair, and thank you to all of the members of this committee. It's very nice to see you this morning. We have two days left in the House, and I'm sure you're as excited as I am for the summer.

I'm pleased to be here with you today to talk about estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure. Today I will provide the committee with an overview of MOI's achievements and highlight our progress on delivering on our priorities over the past year.

Infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting the quality of life enjoyed by all Ontarians. It's what brings us together, connecting us every day to our families, friends, workplaces and activities. When a new road, highway or transit line is built, we are helping hard-working residents

get home to their families, safely and on time. When new high-speed Internet infrastructure is installed, we give families the opportunity to work and educate their children in their respective communities. And when we build hospitals and long-term-care homes, we're ensuring our most vulnerable members are provided the care that they deserve.

Now more than ever, we are investing in infrastructure that will deliver critical services while creating good jobs in communities across Ontario. Simply put, we are making life better for millions of people. Our government is moving forward with the most ambitious capital plan in Ontario's history, investing more than \$184 billion over the next decade. These investments are fundamental to the province's plan for growth and long-term prosperity. Our investments are already getting shovels in the ground on hundreds of priority projects across the province through various provincial and jointly funded programs, many of which are already making a real difference in people's lives.

One of these initiatives is the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, known as ICIP. This program represents up to \$30 billion in combined federal, provincial and partner funding over 10 years for local infrastructure projects, which includes \$10.2 billion in provincial funds. These include investment streams in public transit; green; community, culture and recreation; and rural and northern infrastructure projects. All funding for the program has been fully allocated as of today. Let me tell you briefly about some of these streams.

The rural and northern stream supports roads, bridges, air and marine infrastructure in communities with populations of under 100,000. Over \$325 million in federal-provincial funding has been allocated for 144 rural and northern projects. From a reconstructed road in Georgian Bay to a reconstructed bridge in the township of Chamberlain and an expanded bridge in Wilmot, these projects are making commutes safer and more efficient.

Meanwhile, more than \$700 million in federal-provincial funding has been allocated for over 250 projects in the community, culture and recreation stream. In St. Catharines, we're investing in upgrades in the existing tennis courts and playground at Bogart Street Park. We're also investing in projects that increase safety and community access to recreational places like the YMCA in northern Ontario.

Meanwhile, more than \$475 million in federal-provincial funding has been allocated through two intakes in the green stream, including the rehabilitation and upgrade of a stormwater management facility in Uxbridge, which will protect the surrounding environment from erosion.

Next, the public transit stream supports construction, expansion and improvement of public transit networks. About \$14 billion in federal-provincial funding has been allocated under this stream toward transit projects. This includes a range of Toronto-area transit subway projects and the construction of dedicated bus rapid transit infrastructure in the city of Pickering.

And finally, the COVID-19 resilience stream supports building and renovating health- and safety-related projects in the long-term-care, education and municipal sectors. This stream is delivering over \$1 billion in federal and provincial funding to support more than 10,500 projects.

Our investments are laying the foundation for Ontario's economic growth while supporting critical services for everyone. But it's not just about the bricks and mortar or steel and glass, and it's not just about large dollar figures or numbers of projects. It's about families. It's about workers and businesses. It's about all of us. And it's about ensuring our prosperity today and many years into the future.

A perfect example of this is our investment of nearly \$4 billion in high-speed Internet access. As you know, we made a historic commitment to ensure that no matter where you live, every community in Ontario will have access to reliable high-speed Internet by the end of 2025. To deliver on our ambitious commitment, we have taken bold action. Ontario has finalized agreements worth over \$2.3 billion for nearly 200 high-speed Internet cellular projects across the province. We are making incredible progress, and more projects are continuing to be finalized. Through a competitive process, we have now signed agreements with eight Internet service providers to bring access to more municipalities across Ontario.

Over \$8 million of provincial funding has been committed to projects through the Improving Connectivity for Ontario program, known as ICON, which will bring high-speed Internet access to over 11,000 homes and premises. We are also working with the federal government, through ICON and Canada's Universal Broadband Fund, for a joint investment of nearly \$3.1 billion that will help connect 286,000 homes and businesses across Ontario.

We are also investing in the South Western Integrated Fibre Technology project, known as SWIFT, to bring high-speed Internet to communities in southwestern Ontario.

Meanwhile, in eastern Ontario, rural communities are closer to getting complete cellular coverage through our \$71-million contribution to the Cell Gap Project. Together with the Eastern Ontario Regional Network, Rogers and the federal government, we have been supporting expanded cellular coverage to more communities in eastern Ontario.

We're also speeding up construction of provincially funded high-speed Internet projects in communities through the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021. This legislation is helping to reduce barriers that can cause delays with building high-speed Internet infrastructure. We have also released guidelines and regulations to help provide more certainty for Internet service providers, municipalities, local distribution companies and others to deliver projects faster. And we recently launched our new interactive high-speed Internet map, which will make it easier for Ontarians to learn more about provincially funded high-speed Internet projects happening in their neighbourhoods, including projects that are already making a difference.

One resident who has a cottage in Norfolk county expressed how high-speed Internet access she received through the SWIFT program has brought her family closer together. She talks about how she is able to video-call her family in the States now—especially during the pandemic. "It's like getting my siblings back," the resident has said. It has truly enhanced her quality of life.

Meanwhile, a local northern business that makes handmade specialty chocolates was able to get the supports they need to enhance their online presence just by having access to reliable high-speed Internet services. This ultimately helped increase their sales not just at home, but across Canada.

Our ministry is working hard to bring access to reliable high-speed Internet to every community, and no community will be left behind.

We're also working to ensure that our communities are able to access faster, more reliable and seamless transit. As part of our plan, Ontario is seizing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build vibrant, mixed-use communities around transit stations across the greater Golden Horseshoe. These transit-oriented communities, also known as TOCs, will bring more housing, jobs, retail and public amenities closer to transit.

People's day-to-day lives are getting busier. Between work, family and other responsibilities, they not only want convenience, but they need it. By building transit where people live and work, we are increasing ridership, reducing gridlock, stimulating economic growth, increasing much-needed housing supply, and lowering the cost of building infrastructure for taxpayers.

0910

This program came over to our ministry from the Ministry of Transportation in November 2021, and we have been hard at work ever since. Work is already under way to deliver TOCs along the new Ontario Line and Yonge North subway extension, creating over 73,000 jobs and about 48,000 new residential units, including affordable housing units.

On the Ontario Line south, we have announced TOC plans at five stations.

The TOC at East Harbour will be an integrated transit-centric site that will include a diverse range of commercial and residential space, including affordable housing, retail, food, cultural uses, and community amenities. The site

will also be a multi-modal transit hub incorporating GO, future SmartTrack, TTC light rail transit and the future Ontario Line subway. It will also become a gateway to the Port Lands.

At Corktown station, the TOC site will provide a mix of new housing opportunities and commercial, retail and public realm space, while commemorating the history of the first Parliament site.

The other three TOCs along the Ontario Line south will be Exhibition, King-Bathurst and Queen-Spadina stations, all of which will be complete communities featuring new housing, office and retail space.

Most recently, we announced a TOC on the northern portion of the Ontario Line, at the future Gerrard station, which will create about two acres of public space, including access to retail, a grocery store and other amenities, while adding housing and jobs and a new public park.

Meanwhile, on the Yonge North subway extension, the proposed TOC sites at Bridge and High Tech stations would bring new housing, parkland, commercial, retail and community spaces all within a short distance of transit.

We continue to work closely with the city of Toronto and York region to identify and plan additional opportunities to bring more TOCs to subway stations.

We are also creating new housing and mixed-use communities around GO and light rail transit stations. For example, Ontario is already working with partners to build a TOC at the new Woodbine GO station in Etobicoke, along Highway 27. We're also working with the builder to construct key improvements to the existing Mimico GO station, including a new fully accessible main station building and the extension of a multi-use greenway path for pedestrians and cyclists to use to access the station. We continue to work with Metrolinx and local municipalities to plan additional TOCs and GO and light rail transit stations throughout the GTA.

We are also bringing Ontario Place back to life and redeveloping it into a remarkable, world-class, year-round destination. We are creating an iconic cultural and recreational landmark for the 21st century, complete with expanded parkland, beaches, waterfront access and family-friendly entertainment. We are also finalizing an agreement with Live Nation that will create a new, state-of-the-art, year-round concert venue attraction.

Combined with our plans to expand and enhance the public spaces and parkland, as well as Therme's family-friendly water park and wellness facility, Ontario Place will attract world-class artists and events, drawing even more visitors and tourists to the site and the city of Toronto, creating new jobs, generating income for local businesses and the surrounding area, and boosting the province's economic growth. We are currently getting the site ready for construction. This important work is expected to begin this spring and will ensure that the site's critical infrastructure is brought up to modern standards. And we've continued to work with the city of Toronto, Indigenous communities, stakeholders, the public and key partners as they share the vision for the site.

Ontario Place will feature 43 acres of enhanced parkland and open public space for everyone to enjoy. This includes 12 acres of public space planned on the West Island, which will be free and open year-round, including a new public beach, wetlands, picnic facilities, multi-purpose trails and lookout points. And a new and improved marina will be a lively year-round spot to socialize, grab a meal, enjoy boating and appreciate the water.

Ontario Place, from the first day that it opened, was envisioned as a place to come and learn, play and have fun. I am proud that our government is continuing this tradition by relocating the Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place, which will welcome more than a million visitors a year. This will be a science centre for the next generation—one that will create even more opportunities for families to make memories that last a lifetime.

Another way we're continuing to build Ontario is by delivering major infrastructure public-private partnership projects known as P3s. P3s are used to deliver major projects like bridges, highways, hospitals, subways and correctional facilities through partnering with the private sector.

Infrastructure Ontario's quarterly market update demonstrates our ongoing commitment to effectively deliver major and critical infrastructure projects across the province. Our last update in March includes 38 projects with a value of more than \$35 billion in estimated design and construction costs. Some of the highlights include several projects that are in active procurement, including the Ottawa Hospital's new Civic redevelopment, a new campus that will be one of the largest and most modern teaching hospitals in Canada; and the Ontario Line subway, as requests for proposals have recently been issued to design and build the Pape tunnel, underground stations and the elevated guideway and stations.

Infrastructure Ontario's innovative approaches to infrastructure delivery have also been critical in helping the province respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the accelerated build pilot program, Lakeridge Health announced the completion and opening of its new long-term-care home in Ajax after only 13 months of procurement and construction.

Another way we're supporting our municipalities' infrastructure needs is through Infrastructure Ontario's Loan Program. Since its inception, the loan program has approved more than \$12 billion in loans to support nearly 3,500 projects.

We recognize that smart, targeted investments in critical infrastructure is how we're going to build Ontario.

To help the province's small, rural and northern communities, we're providing direct funding through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, also known as OCIF. This fund helps municipalities renew and rehabilitate critical infrastructure, including road, bridge, water and waste water projects. In 2021, we reaffirmed our commitment to supporting those municipalities by increasing the annual OCIF funding allocation by \$1 billion, bringing our total investment to nearly \$2 billion over five years starting in 2022. This past year, we provided \$400 million

in funding for OCIF. From Kenora to Chatham-Kent and Essex to Glengarry, our government is ensuring that the people of Ontario have access to safe and reliable infrastructure.

Our province is also continuing to provide asset management tools and supports to municipalities in partnership with the Municipal Finance Officers' Association.

Our ministry also now leads the government's general real estate portfolio, known as GREP, one of the largest public sector realty portfolios in Canada. We're consolidating and improving realty management functions across government while supporting a consistent and holistic approach to provincial real estate decisions. We continue to leverage our realty portfolio and work with other ministries to support provincial priorities, such as affordable housing and long-term care. This is part of our promise to make life better for the people of Ontario by working harder, smarter and more efficiently.

Working with Infrastructure Ontario, our ministry continues to support the sale of surplus government properties and forfeited corporate properties, generating revenue while saving taxpayer dollars by reducing liabilities and ongoing maintenance costs. To date, 128 properties have been sold, generating net revenue of more than \$274 million and a liability reduction of more than \$3.8 million.

We also successfully introduced the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023, which allows the province to improve the management of real estate and bring efficiency changes to the environmental assessment process. This will help reduce red tape, optimize office space, enhance fiscal management and save taxpayer dollars. Recently, our ministry invested \$75 million for capital repairs, along with \$4 million for accessibility improvements to address the funding gap in the GREP portfolio.

We are also continuing to optimize and centralize the provincial office real estate portfolio. We are supporting new ways of working in the office and designing modern workplaces to address the changing ways people work in our office, now and into the future. This includes projects in Toronto, Sudbury and Ottawa to optimize government-owned office space and minimize third-party leased office space across the province to unlock and increase the value of government real estate assets. This will help drive workplace transformation and reduce costs to improve the effectiveness of the public service and its agencies. To date, our efforts have led to a reduction of 400,000 rentable square feet in the government's real estate portfolio. We're also working on major realty projects, including the Macdonald Block reconstruction and Whitney Block rehabilitation.

0920

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Our ministry and staff continue to work very hard to focus on our efforts to ensure we are investing in the right infrastructure at the right time. We'll keep pushing forward, investing in infrastructure projects that support communities, create jobs and strengthen Ontario's economy. By building, upgrading and modernizing our infrastructure, we will ensure that our communities

and our families can continue to have a good quality of life.

As you can see, we're very busy at this ministry.

I'm happy to take your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much, Minister.

We will now begin questions and answers in rotations of 20 minutes for the official opposition members of the committee, 10 minutes for the independent member of the committee, and 20 minutes for the government members of the committee for the remainder of the allotted time.

As always, please wait to be recognized by myself before speaking. All questions and comments will need to go through the Chair.

Deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and staff, when you're called to speak, please give your name and your title each time, so that we may accurately record in Hansard who we have.

I will start with the official opposition. MPP French, please go ahead.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Good morning, Minister, and good morning to your team. I would like to say, as the critic for the opposition, that I have appreciated the work your staff have done as we have connected with them.

I do have a number of questions here today. Seeing as how the estimates are now a truncated process, I'm going to do my best to rapid-fire. Much of it is that I'm asking for some follow-up documents, if possible—if you can let me know what we can or can't have.

I'm going to start, as folks are quite interested, with Ontario Place. According to the Trillium, there were more than 30 bidders for the Ontario Place redevelopment. I was wondering if we could have copies of the bid submissions, or a summary of submissions with highlights. What would be an appropriate ask?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'll start off, and then I'll turn it over to Michael Lindsay, who is responsible for our arm's-length agency Infrastructure Ontario.

That is an accurate reflection. The competitive process that we had back in 2019 was highly competitive, and there was a lot of interest. I think there has been interest for many, many years, even before this government and previous governments aligned with this thought that Ontario Place is an asset that has not been fully utilized and the public has not been enjoying the space as it should. Therefore, as part of our call for development, many people were encouraged to make submissions.

I will hand it over to Michael.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Good morning, committee members, Madam Chair. I'm Michael Lindsay, president and CEO of Infrastructure Ontario.

The government of Ontario published an international competition call for development in 2019 that led to the bids that were ultimately received. We were quite transparent at the time with the selection criteria—in fact, even within the disclosure of that call-for-development process and the way it was going to work, what criteria we were looking for from bidders. Amongst other things, it had to animate the island year-round, and every proposal that was

going to prosper had to not require ongoing government subsidy. It was on that basis that we made recommendations to the government of Ontario that led to the short list of people who are the prospective tenants at Ontario Place.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Can the committee have a copy of that? What is an appropriate thing for us to ask for? The copies of the bid submissions would be great.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: We can provide more detail as to how the bids that were ultimately selected conformed with the criteria for the call for development.

The specific bid documents contain commercially confidential and sensitive information.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Could it be a summary of each submission with highlights, then, if that's not too sensitive?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: We're happy to provide more detail as to how each one of the bids that was advanced conformed with the criteria of the government of Ontario.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Was there a fairness monitor for the call-for-development process?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: We worked closely with entities like Colliers and others to make sure that there was a fair and transparent process that was put in place in reviewing the call for development.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: So, specifically, there wasn't a fairness monitor? That doesn't seem usual.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: The process was a fair and transparent one, and a number of third-party advisers worked with us to make sure that that was so.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The original submission deadline for the call for development was September 3, 2019, but the deadline was extended to September 24, as we had seen in a Toronto staff report. Could we have a copy of the extension notice, including the date of the notice?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I will take that one back, MPP. If issued to all bidders, I don't see a problem with providing a copy of that.

I would just note that that extension was a function of the overwhelming interest that we got from around the world for people to come redevelop the iconic Ontario Place.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Why was that deadline extended? Had Therme submitted its bid ahead of the extension?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I will need to go check. But, again, all bids were received consistent with the fair and transparent process whereby we notified all participants of every milestone, including all extensions to the process.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Is that an answer, though, that we can have? You said you'll have to check. But is that something that we can request as a follow-up answer on whether Therme had submitted its bid ahead of the extension?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I see no reason why we couldn't confirm that to be the case.

But again, I want to stress that the process was a fair and transparent one. As we do on all of our processes, we made sure that every single interested party was in the

know as to what the key deadlines were, initially and when they were changed.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I understand that, with a typical procurement, an accounting firm certifies the bid scorecards.

Who certified the scorecards for the Ontario Place redevelopment procurement?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: We had an evaluation team drawn from across government, along with subject matter experts that reviewed all of the bids. There was an evaluation logic. As I said, it's specified in the 2019 call for development proposals, quite transparently, to all bidders, and it was against that criteria that the bids were ultimately evaluated and ranked.

So, in answer to your question, MPP: Yes, this was consistent with what we do elsewhere, where we have an evaluation committee with clear criteria ultimately meeting to discuss scoring in order to advance a recommendation.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: So certifying the scorecards as a practice—that was not something that happened? They were not certified? You had people “evaluate” them?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: What I would say, MPP, is that it's very typical for us to have consensus meetings at the end of evaluations on all of our procurements, all of our calls for development, where evaluators get together. They compare notes in respect of how they evaluated the bids, and they come to a consensus in respect of what score is going to be applied to any bid. That doesn't necessarily entail a “certification” of any scorecard, but I think that that's mostly nomenclature. The evaluation committee came to a joint recommendation as to what the score for every bid was.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: After a procurement process, it's my understanding that it's common practice to provide unsuccessful bidders with a debriefing so they can understand why they weren't selected.

Were unsuccessful bidders offered a debriefing after Therme was selected?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Yes. They were notified, first and foremost, that they had not been selected in connection to the call for development, and as a part of that notice that went out to bidders, we offered to provide them with feedback as to why.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you.

Can we, as a committee, have a copy of the Therme 95-year lease?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: The lease terms that we have with Therme are subject to confidential commercial considerations. To the extent that we are able to provide you with a summary as to how Therme's bid conformed with the call for development process and the key criteria that were established by the province of Ontario, we're happy to provide detail related to that. But the document that is the lease itself is very commercially confidentially sensitive.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would accept the summary. You can't blame a girl for trying for the lease.

Does the lease allow Therme to use the land for a use other than what has been presented to the public?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: As is typical for a lease for a tenant in connection to crown property, there are prescribed uses within the lease. Those prescribed uses within the Therme lease conform to what has been communicated as Therme's project down at Ontario Place.

0930

Ms. Jennifer K. French: But seeing as the public hasn't seen the lease, there are things in the lease that the public is unaware of. So it conforms to the lease—but my question is, are they allowed to use the land for something other than what the public understands to date?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: The answer is no.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: What happens if Therme can't make the spa scheme work at any point over the next century?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Again, I want to be careful about not inadvertently beginning to disclose portions of the lease terms that are otherwise commercially and confidentially sensitive, so I'm going to speak more in generalities, as is consistent with our contracting practices in the province of Ontario. As you might imagine, we have within our contracts many, many articles around termination for default or failure to perform. Those are present in the Live Nation lease, as well. I think that the team has done a good job in trying to make sure that in various scenarios where, for whatever reason, the partnership with Therme isn't delivering the benefits to Ontarians that we want it to, we have rights as the province of Ontario.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Can Therme build something else? Does the 95-year lease revert back to the government? Could Therme sell the lease to someone else? I will package those all together.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I'll answer the question in two parts. First, the lease commits Therme to build, as the minister was saying, this family-friendly wellness water park amenity. It also, not insignificantly, commits them to making significant investments in enhancing the public realm and public spaces of Ontario Place. It's both of those things that they're obligated to do, per the lease.

There are, as is typical in most of the leases that we do with tenants in connection to crown land, rights of review and approval over transfer of control, consistent with our partners ultimately being acquired or divesting their interest in connection to any leasehold that they have. Those standard provisions are also within there.

Again, I want to be careful not to inadvertently back into disclosing things which are confidential or commercially sensitive—but in the spirit of your question, these are standard types of clauses that we have in all leases with counterparties in the province of Ontario, and they are present here.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Is the ministry aware that Therme also submitted a proposal to redevelop the Niagara power station, despite having already won the redevelopment rights for Ontario Place?

Hon. Kinga Surma: [*Inaudible*] unaware of their previous proposals or activities.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It would seem, from where I sit, potentially concerning. So I'd ask the ministry if they have concerns that Therme has submitted a bid for a project that would directly compete with its Ontario Place project that is just two hours down the QEW.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: MPP, I would say a couple of things, the first of which is that Therme, as an international organization, is engaged in business development activities around the world. In fact, they're advancing these same types of facilities in places like Manchester, Glasgow etc. I can't speak to the business model that they might be running, but I would note that they remain very enthusiastic, very excited about being right at the centre of downtown Toronto, on the waterfront. It is one of the most important properties that they are developing right now. They have shown to us, in our continuing conversation, nothing but that enthusiasm for this particular project.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Is Therme entitled to a cancellation fee if the Ontario Place project collapses—and how much, if there is one?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Again, I want to be careful about not inadvertently backing into the disclosure of things that are commercially or confidentially sensitive.

I will say, in the spirit of your question, that it is typical for leases to have within them termination provisions, both during the initial development phase and during the operations phase.

Consistent with the way in which we do leaseholds with various tenants on crown lands, there is language in there about if there is a failure of the project to reach certain milestones—the rights and considerations that are due not only to Therme, but, frankly, to the government of Ontario as well.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Can you confirm rumours of a \$400-million cancellation fee if the project collapses?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I can categorically deny that there is a \$400-million cancellation fee.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate that categorical denial. Thank you.

How am I for time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Six minutes and 30 seconds.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: May we please have the business plan for the proposed Ontario Place parking garage?

Hon. Kinga Surma: What we would like to do—and it would be my hope, as the Minister of Infrastructure—would be, in the upcoming months, to go out to market on a science centre, which would include a parking facility. We, as a government, have made our own internal assessment of the condition of the science centre, the option of it to be relocated to Ontario Place. We want to hear from the market and accept bids to build the science centre and a potential parking facility. So I would like to proceed with that step. I don't want to compromise government and lose our ability to negotiate and leverage our position.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: At this time, before next steps that the minister has just talked about, what is the ministry's cost estimate for that parking garage? And how

much would it cost someone to park there for a day? How many people would need to park there every day in order for the government to break even on the investment?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Again, I think it would compromise our ability to be able to find a future proponent to build a science centre facility and a parking establishment on the site. My request would be that I go out to market, and Infrastructure Ontario would accept bids and make a recommendation to government. In terms of parking costs and maintenance and all of those pieces, that is something that we will work on in the coming months. I think our focus right now is to make sure that pedestrians and people are safe while they continue to use Ontario Place facilities and that we focus on the site servicing that will be starting imminently, as well as completing the environmental assessment work.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Some have estimated the cost of that would-be parking garage at about \$450 million. Does the ministry see that as a fair estimate at this stage?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I will not comment on that, again, because I don't want to compromise my ability.

What I will speak to is the fact that parking is a necessity at Ontario Place. Mums with three kids who will be going to Ontario Place to enjoy the science centre or the public realm space may choose to drive their car or take a van. I will also say that the science centre, in its busiest time of existence, was utilizing a thousand spaces alone. Keep in mind that we will have a stage that will be operational all year round, not just from May to September—all-year-round concerts. We will have 43 acres of public realm space, various activities for children. We will have a water park, a wellness centre, and a brand new science centre with more exhibition space. We want it to be accessible to families. We want people from Brampton, from Scarborough, from all across Ontario to be able to go there to enjoy a day. As well you know, we're connecting a brand new subway line to Exhibition Place, working on the last-mile connection—it's happening. And we want to make it as accessible as possible, whether you're walking there, cycling there, taking the GO, taking the subway, or if you're a mum with three children.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: We appreciate accessibility.

Still on the parking garage: The call-for-development document warned prospective bidders, "Participants should consider the adequacy of parking for their development concept," warning bidders that they would need to work with the parking that existed. But the publicly funded parking garage was revealed late last year, long after Therme had won the bid. So why was the basic condition of the call-for-development process changed after Therme had won the bid?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Again, I will reiterate the fact that we believe that parking is absolutely necessary. Once the redevelopment of Ontario Place takes place, we anticipate four to six million people visiting the site. We want it to be accessible. We want it to be family-friendly. Parking is a big component of that. We will have three tenants with activities all year round which do not exist today. People from all across the province will be driving down to

Ontario Place. Again, we want to make it as accessible for everyone.

0940

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I can appreciate that rationale. But specific to the basic condition of the call-for-development process—it was changed. Why?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute and 10 seconds left.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: MPP, multiple bidders—in fact, a significant number of them—cited in response to that provision that's within the call for development that the existing parking allocation availability at a combination of Ontario Place and Exhibition Place would need to be enhanced in order to suit their business needs and models, even notwithstanding the historic investment the government of Ontario is making in bringing subway service to Exhibition and the last-mile connectivity that goes with that.

So the change was more with reference to multiple proponents ultimately coming back to us and saying that we needed to think about investments in parking in order to animate the kind of traffic that Minister Surma just made reference to. It certainly was not only Therme that came back to us and said that that was required.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Fourteen seconds.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you. I will come back with a few more when it is my turn. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move for 10 minutes to the independent. MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you, Minister and everyone, for being here this morning.

I'll just stay on Ontario Place for a moment before moving on.

Minister, you mentioned 46 million visits. You mentioned all the prospective operators pointed out the need for increased parking capacity. What is the anticipated modal split for the visitors?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: It's a great question, and I think it's something that we're still figuring out the final ratio of. It's also something, MPP, that I think is going to change over time. Part of what is the consideration here is that we needed a bridging solution to the arrival of the Ontario Line, which is presently under construction.

So without providing a specific modal split figure, I'll simply say that I think we're all very excited, as the minister has just said, that a future Ontario Place is going to be accessible in many different ways to people from across the region—GO, subway, parking etc.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Obviously, there are a lot of players at Ontario Place. I presume it's going to be happening at different stages, basically, as you just referenced.

How long are visitors to Ontario Place going to need to walk through and pass construction before the totality of the facility is complete?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Well, our timelines have been very clear. We anticipate a fully functional, complete—all tenant work, all new facilities complete by 2030. Of course, there will be staged construction. Site servicing is

anticipated to start imminently. The next step will be to make those public realm improvements to build 43 acres of public realm space. Then, it is anticipated that Therme will commence its construction, and then also, at the same time, we anticipate that we could start constructing the science centre near 2025, followed by the Live Nation component, which would—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Apologies for cutting you off. Does that timeline include the time for any off-site road and/or subway works that have to be done to facilitate the opening of the new park?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Well, as you know, for any infrastructure project, we always work in close collaboration with the city of Toronto, the TTC, MTO to make sure that there are traffic considerations that keep pedestrians safe. That is an obligation of the ministry, and so that is ongoing work.

Again, as it's staged, we've made a commitment to keep Trillium Park open for as long as we can, but of course, nothing takes precedence over safety of workers and pedestrians.

Mr. Stephen Blais: You mentioned that Colliers, and I think you said others, might have been involved in the evaluation process. Was it just Colliers, or was it Colliers and—if it's others, who are the others?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: MPP, I'm happy to specify the others. I believe it was KPMG that we were also working with.

If it's okay, I will take that away as a report back to the committee on specifically who the third-party advisers were.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Most of these third parties are large, often international groups. What measures were in place to ensure that they themselves were not participating in any of the consortia bidding on the project?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Our standard form advisory services contracts contain a lot of clauses related to conflicts of interest.

You're right; these are large international firms with broad businesses. But we have found, for these entities, they do a very good job of making sure that internal controls are in place to ensure that we are getting advice that is tailored to us and to the advantage of people of Ontario, regardless of what the rest of the business that they have internationally is.

Mr. Stephen Blais: But it is possible that a group would have had internal groups working for both sides.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I can't speak to whether or not that would have been possible or if it happened. I can speak only to the fact that I feel the taxpayers of Ontario were well protected by the commercial constructs of our advisory services.

Mr. Stephen Blais: But would your commercial constructs and advisory services disallow a large organization like a Colliers or KPMG from having different internal working groups working for, effectively, both sides?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Our advisory services contracts ensure that any confidential information that the province

of Ontario is providing to any entity is appropriately protected and not shared internally or between organizations.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Minister, you mentioned the real estate portfolio. In going through the estimates, I was looking at some information about the capital and the operating side of the portfolio. How would you define the portfolio in terms of its mix? What is the mix between office space versus amenities like Ontario Place and other things that are more tourist of nature etc.?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Well, that's a very complex question and could quite possibly occupy the rest of the hour. It is one of—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Just as a percentage—on a percentage basis.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'm not sure I could do that for you—a percentage basis—at this moment. But we can get you that information.

Keep in mind that there is general real estate that MOI is responsible for—office buildings, properties, surplus properties—and then there is also real estate that is under other capital ministries—education, MTO, MNRF.

What I think is important to recognize is that our government is trying to make better use of those properties and those lands and assets.

Mr. Stephen Blais: You mentioned that there were 128 properties sold for \$274 million. I think that's what you said, about—just over two million, I think, of property. Those are largely office properties?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Those would be declared surplus, and there is a whole internal process that government follows in order to even put them out on the market.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate the surplus and the process. Before they were declared surplus, they would have been office space or they would have been retail? What kind of space would we be talking about?

Hon. Kinga Surma: They would have been properties that are no longer in use by provincial government. So they would have been lands—they could have been formerly MTO lands that are no longer in use. I'm speaking in generalities, but they would not be serving a purpose to government at this time.

We would also go through a round where we would contact all the various ministries to see if they had an interest in the lands. We would also go through a round where we would contact other levels of government to see if they would have an interest in the lands. And then, if there was no interest from a public service perspective, we would put it out to the market.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Sorry; I was trying to understand the form that the property or the land was taking before it was offered for sale. The reason I'm going there is that in March of this year, the Ontario Public Service Modern Office Space Version 1.0 document was released—or at least that's the date that's on the document. It changes the way in which office space is going to be organized and utilized within the public service.

Recently, the federal government in Ottawa announced that they are looking to dispose of up to 50% of their office space nationwide. Obviously, in Ottawa, that has a big

impact. If such a policy were to be taken by the provincial government, that would have, I would imagine, a sizable impact here in downtown Toronto. So I'm trying to get to where your ministry is in that analysis.

Hon. Kinga Surma: This was raised by MPP Harden. We've had a conversation. I'm looking forward to working with you.

Yes, I am aware of those activities. I think what our focus is—for example, we have the Toronto optimization strategy. We also have the regional optimization strategy, where we're able to optimize space into government-owned assets. The government also leases property, so we're looking to see where we can consolidate in order to save taxpayer dollars, be good fiscal managers. Those two programs are collectively happening right now.

0950

In terms of the surplus property, we've also brought forward a program where we evaluate the lands to see if they can serve a social purpose, and we've executed on that already. So are the lands—if no other ministry, no other level of government sees a use, we also do an internal analysis to see if this could be a property where perhaps a long-term-care home can be built, or any other massive provincial priority such as affordable and attainable housing, given the housing crisis.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I think we're in a little bit of a different situation than the federal government in the sense that actually, our priority is to really house workers in government-owned buildings.

As you know, I presented legislation in the House where we are centralizing real estate authority. We want to make sure that every single lease that is existent is a good lease, is up to date, and evaluate whether those spaces are necessary.

I'll just turn it over to Michael.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Twenty seconds.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: MPP, I would just point out that a key part of that Toronto consolidation strategy is the massive project that's being done at Macdonald Block right now, which is going to eliminate the need for as much as 568,000 square feet of leased office space. I think that is a very important hinge pin in the broader strategy associated with optimization of office space.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move to the government side for 20 minutes. MPP Holland.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you, Minister Surma, for being with us here today, and I want to thank your staff for the tremendous amount of work that everybody has put into the submission that you're making to us today.

I actually had to go back and look to see that this was an Infrastructure Ontario project, because we've been fixated on one small part of the province here, so far, in our questioning. There are a lot of investments being made across all of Ontario that I think need to be highlighted, needs to be looked over. Our government is investing in all areas of infrastructure that's required, so I want to take us outside the science centre and recognize that we are a very large province with lots of infrastructure needs.

Specifically, we know that the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program is partnered with the federal government and local municipal governments and is investing a significant amount of money into the local communities. Could you please provide us with a fiscal profile of the program?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Yes, of course, and thank you very much for highlighting it. You're right; there are needs that are real that exist across the province of Ontario of equal importance.

The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program has been a very successful program. It has allowed us to invest in projects in northern, rural communities through that stream—make heavy investments, for example, in public transit infrastructure, which was so incredibly critical particularly during COVID, when we know transit agencies and municipalities were really reliant on the provincial government; community culture and recreational facilities across the province; green projects, which I would highlight and are, I think, one of the most important projects or in the greatest need across the province. What I'm hearing from municipalities is the demand for more, which of course we want to support. Why they're so critical and so important is that they also enable municipalities and the provincial government to unlock housing opportunities and job creation within their own communities, so of course we support that stream. And then the COVID resilience stream—we invested heavily in schools, in long-term-care facilities, in municipal infrastructure to make sure that families and workers were safe throughout COVID. I think that we're in a situation now where all of the dollars are allocated. This was a successful program.

Our ministry, including the deputy—we've been pushing the federal government very heavily to renew or to create a new program that would meet the needs of Ontarians. We have not been successful to date, and we're very, very disappointed in the 2023 federal budget, as there wasn't any funding allocated to infrastructure. It was very disappointing to us.

That being said, we are meeting with the federal government in the coming weeks, and we will continue to push as hard as we can.

I think the stream that is of greatest significance today would be the green stream—continuing to invest in drinking water, waste water, stormwater, underground infrastructure, the very core infrastructure needs, so that communities can grow, so that we can build more housing, and so that we can provide job opportunities across the province.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I appreciate that.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Minister Surma, for presenting today.

I understand that the Infrastructure Ontario is one of the significant capital funding for projects needed for the infrastructure of Ontario, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank the ministry for the—in the last budget, Mississauga—Erin Mills, my riding, received \$45

million to rebuild the South Common Community Centre, which is a significant project to people in Mississauga–Erin Mills. Looking into other municipalities which are not as big as Mississauga or Mississauga–Erin Mills—and I understand that that project received to the city already, the transfer has been done for the city to start shovels in the ground.

But for the municipalities which are not as big significantly, what is the plan for ensuring major infrastructure projects like hospitals and highways—we are continuing wishing those. But what about other projects like recreational projects which have a different nature? What's the plan for your submission?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I love how you threw in your community centre. I know I was with you on that day, actually. It was one of the first responsibilities when I became the Minister of Infrastructure—it was actually one of the first announcements that I made, so a very memorable one. That was through the community culture and recreation stream, through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, which we hope will be renewed in the future—or similar to. Certainly, a community centre changes a whole neighbourhood. It's so important.

In terms of supporting our smaller municipalities, back in 2021 our government made an announcement to increase the OCIF funding, which was a significant increase, from \$1 billion to \$2 billion over five years. I believe last year our ministry provided close to \$400 million to small, rural and northern communities so that they can continue to invest in critical infrastructure. This was something that smaller municipalities were asking of government for many, many years. In fact, I would highlight that the timing was quite critical, because we made that announcement and that investment just before the province was faced with high inflation costs and high construction costs. So I think increasing the funding at that point in time provided a great deal of stability to our municipal partners.

Again, we will continue to push with the federal government to focus on infrastructure in the province of Ontario. I would hope that there would be a future stream for municipalities to nominate their projects.

And then I think it's important that we highlight that \$184 billion that we're spending. The \$184 billion means that we're building schools, long-term-care facilities, correctional facilities, critical highways that ensure the delivery of goods and the movement of people, hospitals that will take care of people for 75 years all across the province—the largest infrastructure investments in the history of this province.

It is our job to make sure that we keep pushing forward and build this province so that we don't have capacity issues in our hospitals, so that we don't have long waitlists for long-term care, so that people aren't stuck in traffic, so that seniors can get the care they deserve and children can have the absolute best environment to learn.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Cuzzetto.

1000

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the minister and her team for being here today.

My family has lived in Port Credit for 73 years, and that's the area that I represent, but I've never seen this many infrastructure projects going on—the Dixie interchange, the Credit River bridge, the new hospital being built, the LTC being built, the BRT, the LRT. This is going to be a transit-oriented community. How will this help us build the 1.5 million homes that we need in this province of Ontario moving forward, for immigrants and for our children?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I will never shy away from saying that Mississauga is certainly receiving a steady amount of investment, whether it be through the Trillium hospital; community centres; public transit, with their Hurontario line. Certainly, the community is growing, and the investments are necessary.

In terms of shifting over to the Transit-Oriented Communities Program, that, I believe, has been a very successful program delivered by our government, one that has received a great amount of support from our municipal partners—and a keen interest, in fact, from the federal government, which is great news. Ultimately, it's about building communities around transit. We want to make life easier and more affordable. We want to add to the supply of housing, but we don't just want to build station boxes anymore. We want them to be complete communities—but also provide other amenities that are necessary in the local area. Perhaps there's a need for child care, public realm space, a grocery store.

For all of our subway stations, where there is a transit-oriented community possibility, there is a level of public consultation that occurs. The city of Toronto or York region is involved, as well, and we take that feedback and make sure that we can provide the community amenities that are necessary.

With the program thus far and the stations that we have made public already, through the Ontario Line and Yonge North, we will be providing an additional close to 50,000 housing units, and there's more to come. In fact, we're working with the city of Toronto and York region on future stations, as well.

We're also working very diligently on opportunities along the GO rail system.

We think that housing and transit should go hand in hand and be built together. And we're executing on that program today.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you.

How much time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There is nine minutes left.

MPP Babikian.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you, Minister, and your team for coming and informing us about our past and future infrastructure projects and why they are important. All of us, we know, are in different areas of the province

and we represent those areas and we realize that the infrastructure is deteriorating and those projects are important for the well-being of our province and our residents.

I know the ICIP program was a very successful one. For example, to my knowledge, I know that the community and culture stream was very popular, where you had a \$1.1-billion budget allocated and you had asks for \$11 billion. People keep asking me when we are going to have the next program coming so that we can further our needs and construct our community centres, roads etc.

Also, public transportation is very important. We have seen how the Kennedy line was developed, and the other lines—but also there are future plans; for example, I'm from Scarborough, and for Scarborough, the Sheppard subway extension east.

What are the possibilities and what are the future forecasts that we will have further co-operation from the federal government to bring up a new stream of infrastructure funding? Our province and our residents need it. Can you elaborate a little bit more on that aspect?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I will speak to the work that the ministry and I have done throughout the last year and a half.

We announced the opening of the green stream, which allowed municipalities the second round to make their submissions. At that same time, we became aware that that was the last funding stream available through the program. So, right away, we started conversations with the federal government, reminding them that Ontario was soon to be finished nominating projects and that we should start discussions as to what the future will look like. We've met with the federal government on several occasions. We've attended FPT meetings with Premiers from all provinces and territories.

The truth is, all provinces and territories feel the same way and have the same needs. They want a new program. They want it to be executed quickly. They support highway construction, public transit investment. They support investment in the core, critical infrastructure needs like stormwater, waste water, drinking water infrastructure, because they recognize that it unlocks other possibilities. You can't have a community centre without access to that core infrastructure, without a road connecting to it, without the water and sewer services. All provinces and territories were in agreement that those were the needs. We were advised that there would be something coming in the budget, and that was not the case. So of course, we'll be pushing very heavily in the next FPT meeting, which will be at the end of June. I would hope that it will be a fruitful discussion and there will be positive results out of that meeting. We will have to see how that discussion goes. But we have not stopped pushing for it at all. We are in a situation where all provinces and territories have the exact same needs as we do.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: How much time do I have?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have four and a half minutes.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Minister, for your presentation. It's great to hear that we are investing so much in infrastructure across the province.

Having said that, we know that cost escalation, inflation, market volatility, high interest rates and labour challenges have affected projects not just in Ontario, but across Canada and the world. Despite this, the provincial government is still continuing to move critical infrastructure projects forward.

Minister, can you please explain how this government can be able to continue making progress and why it's important to continue with major projects?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I think it's safe to say—and Michael Lindsay says it all the time, as well as my deputy—that we are probably building in one of the toughest moments in modern history, with everything that we're facing from an economic perspective. Those challenges are real challenges. Municipalities face them. The federal government faces them. We face them.

I often say that when someone goes to the grocery store and realizes that the cost of milk has gone up and feels that pain going to the grocery store—can you imagine how the pain is felt from a provincial government that has to buy basically all of the supplies and equipment to expand a subway system by 50%, and other projects? We certainly feel that pain. But we have to forge ahead because we made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we would build a resilient health care system, that we would end hallway health care, and we're doing that with \$50 billion worth of investments in health care across the province.

We made a commitment that we would expand public transit and make sure that we finally try to tackle traffic and congestion. We're doing that with our subway system, our GO rail system and other investments in municipalities.

We made a commitment to tackle the long wait-lists and make sure that our seniors were in long-term-care homes that have the best standards, the most modern infectious-disease standards to protect them in the future from similar situations, like a virus—and then, of course, schools, so that children would have safe and modern places to learn.

We are staging our largest, most complex projects very strategically to make sure that there's enough market capacity to handle all of the things that we're building, because we're building a lot at once. We are constantly engaging with our builders and our proponents. We've incorporated the progressive procurement model, the alliance model to make sure that there's closer co-operation between the contract owner and the builder to assess risk, to assess timelines, and to assess schedules and designs.

1010

Of course, we've presented a number of pieces of legislation to remove those barriers. I know you've heard a particular minister mention them in the House very frequently. Those are real. Those pieces of legislation truly

make an impact in terms of building a project more expeditiously and efficiently, and they have contributed to our success in building our subway system that was announced in 2019.

As well, we presented three pieces of legislation to expedite the building of broadband high-speed Internet.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Mr. Billy Pang: It is good that we have a timeline, we have a budget.

But there was a tradition that we were always late and over budget. How are we going to overcome those issues?

Hon. Kinga Surma: By building as quickly as possible. Look at our rapid-delivery pilot program where we build long-term-care homes. We leveraged hospital-owned land, we leveraged our partnership with the municipality to make sure that permits and all other approvals on-site—we used provincial tools like MZOs, and, to some degree, we used the modular build method as a construction method, and we built them faster than ever in history before.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We're out of time for this round, but there are more rounds ahead.

We'll start off with the official opposition. MPP Harden, there's just going to be about three minutes left, probably, but go ahead for now.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'll be succinct.

I want to pick up the thread of a conversation MPP Blais started.

We know the federal government has a big interest, as we talked about before at this committee, in converting government properties into some form of housing, and they have a process.

In our last discussion, you mentioned that the ministry is building a list of vacant government properties—"surplus" government properties was, I think, the word. Is that a list that can be shared with the opposition?

Hon. Kinga Surma: You're right; one of the things that we have done in order to make sure that we can execute on the optimization strategy, on surplus properties for social purposes, on a centralized approach for real estate and government assets, was to build a very thorough inventory so that we can scan and we can analyze each property and assess them all individually. And through that, we are in the midst of establishing a centre of excellence, with professionals in the field who will be able to help us with that.

I don't think it would be appropriate for government—oh, sorry; I will pass it along to my ADM, who came to my rescue on this particular question.

Mr. Bruce Singbush: I'm Bruce Singbush, assistant deputy minister of the realty division.

All properties that are surplus and available for sale are listed on Infrastructure Ontario's website, which is a publicly available, publicly searchable platform where the public can clearly see the properties that are available.

Mr. Joel Harden: Chair, pardon me; I just want to make sure I can get my time back, just to follow up, because I don't have much time.

Is it possible, within the search engine you're discussing, to narrow the query so we can identify the surplus properties? That's their specific feedback. This is why I asked the question. The federal discussion is very much based upon how we can make sure the housing can be built on a non-profit basis.

If government, as you were talking about before, sells 128 properties, I'm assuming to private market buyers, that's unlikely to become deeply affordable in the context that we urgently need.

For example, to bring it to a real-life scenario, here in the city of Toronto, the city runs a Streets to Homes outreach program. I'm sure you're familiar, as a resident of Toronto yourself, that when someone in mental health distress is found in a subway station causing a disturbance, outreach workers from that program are basically, at this point, only empowered to calm the person down with a cup of coffee. There's no housing to put someone in—temporary housing.

The federal discussion that's evolving is suggesting that supportive housing could be a spot if governments partnered and didn't just engage in the selling off of surplus properties—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Harden, I'm sorry.

Mr. Joel Harden: We'll pick up the thread afterward.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes. It now being 10:15, we'll recess until 1 p.m., and we can pick the conversation up then. Thank you very much.

The committee recessed from 1015 to 1300.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to resume consideration of the 2023-24 expenditure estimates referred to this committee. We will now resume consideration of vote 4001 of the estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure. There is now a total of 47 minutes remaining for the review of these estimates.

When the committee recessed this morning, the opposition had the floor, and I look to MPP Harden to resume. You have 17 minutes left.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, again, to our presenters for being here. Hello, colleagues. I'll be relatively brief, Chair, and then pass back to my colleague from Oshawa. I just want to tie the conversation in a bow.

Would we be able—pursuant to our conversation before the break, I understand it's publicly available information that Infrastructure Ontario has about its properties—to get a segregated list of all the vacant surplus properties mapped across the province? As I understand it, from when we met off-line, there may not be a lot in the city of Toronto for some of the needs I was mentioning, but there may be elsewhere. It would just be good for collaboration, I think. So if there's a possibility of getting a segregated list, that would be my final ask before passing it to my colleague.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I really appreciate your interest in this particular space, just given everything that's going on, some of the challenges that communities are facing. I think

that there is a process that we follow and publish when we are disposing of a property. We are continuously working on that inventory piece, and so we can take it back to the Ministry of Infrastructure and see what we can provide, but it just would not be available at this time.

Mr. Joel Harden: Okay. Thank you.

Over to my colleague.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: We all had a little bit of a break and time to reflect on some of our discussion this morning, so I want to circle back a little bit to a few things.

One of the things that I'm concerned with is the insistence that everything is commercially confidential. I'm wondering what trade secret or proprietary information could be included in a lease agreement. Everything this morning was, in effect, "just trust us." But that isn't good enough when we're talking about such significant projects in the province.

The lease has been negotiated and signed for Ontario Place. How could the province's economic interest be affected by letting the public know what this lease says after the fact?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I can start off, and then I'll pass it along to Michael to speak more about the technical terms and conditions of the lease.

Governments are elected to make decisions for the taxpayers in the best interests of taxpayers, and we make decisions every single day. We make decisions in cabinet, we make decisions in committee and in the Legislature, on the floor. We follow a democratic process and, on their behalf, we make decisions. Obviously, government will always try to negotiate the best possible deal for the taxpayer. We want to make sure that we address their needs and provide what they're looking for.

When we speak about Ontario Place—one of the primary concerns for me was the fact that the island had been left in great disrepair and there wasn't constant upkeep. That was something we were able to negotiate that we didn't have before. On top of that, we will have attractions that will be operational all year round, as well as hundreds of millions of private sector investment into the island to make it sustainable, to protect it from erosion and flooding, and to make it beautiful. Those were the things that we negotiated in the best interest of taxpayers.

I'll hand it over to Michael for the technical—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I do appreciate that. Everybody in Ontario wants this to be a successful project that meets the needs and interests of Ontarians. But to that end, how can the public trust the integrity of this process when it is so opaque and everything is, as we heard this morning—and they're my words, but the feel is, "just trust us."

I had asked for a report by the fairness monitor, but there was no fairness monitor. There was, perhaps, as we were told, a process that we should just trust. But without a fairness monitor, there isn't that report.

I would also—and I'll turn this to Mr. Lindsay to answer—ask for the scorecards that we talked about earlier. What is the scoring methodology? It isn't good

enough to say "just trust us" when we're talking about—the public is raising questions about the integrity of this development process. So that's what I'm looking for.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I have a few housekeeping items before I get to your specific question, MPP.

I have tabled with the Clerk the notice to participants that was issued on August 28, 2019, that shows the extension from the 3rd of September to the 24th of September.

I also wanted to follow up: Another thing I committed to you this morning to provide was a sense of when bids were received. Two thirds of the bids that we received were received between the original date and the extension date; that includes Therme's bid. But that's pretty commonly associated with a process whereby bidders are given more time to work on these iconic kinds of bids. You would expect them to take that time—so, again, consistent with process; everybody treated fairly per this notice to participants.

Two-part answer to your question, MPP—the first of which is, I think the government of Ontario has actually been quite transparent in this call-for-development process about what it was we wanted in respect to bids. That was publicly transmitted through the call-for-development document; it has not changed since in respect of the things that we were looking for. And as we committed this morning, I think we can show you how each one of the winning bidders conformed with that.

To your specific question about confidentiality and commercial sensitivity: I would just note that it isn't just the province of Ontario and information that would be commercially sensitive to us that features in these types of lease agreements. We get into these lease agreements with multinational organizations that have their own negotiations going on around the world, and much of the information that's within that lease document pertains to the commitments that they are ultimately making to us in respect of the investment that they're bringing to the table, which is considerable; in respect of the participation that they're allowing us to have in revenue arising from their activities at the island.

As we said this morning, they're in the process of working with Manchester and Glasgow and Budapest etc. Much of what we do to protect commercial confidential information is on behalf of our partners, who would not want that information to be known. So I think that's just an important note—that it isn't just the considerations of the province of Ontario that are protected by that approach, but also our counterparties, which is important because that's what enables us to do deals with private sector counterparties.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Can you provide the scorecards or the methodology that we had been talking about earlier?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I would recommit, as I did this morning, ma'am, to providing a summary of how each one of the winning bidders conformed with the province's criteria.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would also ask for the names of the people on the committee who reviewed and assessed the bids. Is that something I can request?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I will take that back with the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Can you make a note that I have requested that, and I'll take it back? I don't know what that means in terms of commitment to the committee. Can we have an answer on whether we can have an answer?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Yes, we can have—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay. You know what I mean there.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Acknowledgement of the question—whether you can provide it or not. Thank you.

When we had talked about the parking garage earlier, Minister—and I'm not sure, because I can't review Hansard yet, but did I understand that the new science centre would be built on or connected to the parking garage?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Yes, there is an option to integrate both into one facility. Again, it's part of the due diligence work that we're conducting at—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I didn't think that that had been mentioned in the development permit application submitted to the city, so that was sort of the first I had heard of it.

Also, today, Minister, you talked about more exhibition space when it comes to the science centre, but if your ministry can't speak to how much the parking garage might cost, let alone the parking garage with a science centre option, how can we say that when we don't know what the market will say is feasible for that site?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Standard practice in respect of capital projects here in the province of Ontario, which is something that we've done for quite some time and I think makes us a leader in the world, is, we publish a pipeline of the major capital projects that we're going to do on a quarterly basis. That provides a sense of not only when we think we're going to procure things, but it also provides an indicative range of what the design and construction cost associated with each one of those assets is going to be. We do it quarterly. I think it's important because it allows the market to understand the likely quantum of investment to pursue or to build any given project. So I think the one commitment that we can make is, as we continue to refine options related to the science centre and the parking facility, at some point it will become part of the Infrastructure Ontario pipeline, with all of that detail as we provide for other projects too.

1310

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As you had explained earlier a couple of times about the folks you heard from, other than Therme, about the need for adequate parking and what that would look like—my take-away was that the ministry has work to do and, as you said, due diligence in the next part of the process, imagining a science centre on the parking garage and whatnot. It seems that there are

some clear specifics that the ministry has in mind, and then for others we have to wait for the market to tell us whether or not that's feasible. It's, again, back to the process. I don't have faith, so enlighten me.

Hon. Kinga Surma: First of all, just to address your previous comments: In terms of the development application with the city, as with any development application, we work with the city, we are given the opportunity to make adjustments and amendments and changes. That happens usually when there's a consultation or when there's new information, so we will continue to work with the city on the development application.

It's important for us to recognize that this is a massive redevelopment project, with many parts and pieces to it. We have an environmental assessment. We have public realm work. We're building a new year-round operational stage, a new science centre, last-mile connections to the subway and Exhibition Place so that we can better coordinate both sides, and a brand new wellness centre and park, as well as the shoreline enhancements and improvements that need to be done to preserve the island. As you can imagine, there are a lot of moving pieces, a lot of work done on all of those factors that are coming together.

When we announced our vision to redevelop Ontario Place we were clear that we wanted to keep the public apprised of what we were doing, which is why, a few weeks ago, we took the initiative to update the public. We simply wanted to update the public on the work that we have done thus far because there are so many moving pieces. I'll reference the public realm space, for example. Through the public consultation process, we heard very clearly that people wanted a public realm/public park space. So we did that. That was reflective of our plans that we showed to the public—43 acres—as well as highlighted the 12 acres on the west end. We also heard that people really appreciated the marina and wanted an operational marina, so we went out to the public and let them know that we would be doing a market sounding in order to modernize and upgrade the marina, as well as many other things that were said in that particular announcement.

Our hope is to keep the public with us and update them on all of these important steps, and we will as site servicing work starts, we will as the environmental assessment is completed, and we will throughout the development application process.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Can we have copies of the reports or recommendations from Mark Saunders, as the special adviser on Ontario Place development?

Hon. Kinga Surma: He fulfilled that role. We can take that back and respond.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'll take from that that there were reports or recommendations from his work?

Hon. Kinga Surma: It was largely before my time as minister. My understanding is, his preliminary role was really to be a liaison with the city of Toronto.

You were there before I became minister, so if you'd like to add—

Mr. Michael Robertson: I was.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Were there formal recommendations or reports? If so, can we have them?

I would add, then, if you're going to speak to this: How much was Mr. Saunders paid for his work?

Mr. Michael Robertson: My name is Michael Robertson. I'm the assistant deputy minister of the Ontario Place Redevelopment Secretariat in the Ministry of Infrastructure.

As the minister has said, Mr. Saunders was a special adviser on the project and provided his advice directly to government. The ministry does not have any reports that he may have made. As for his contract with the government, this was through an order in council. We can get that information and provide it to this committee.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I will continue with the Ontario Science Centre piece. We've heard different things from the minister at different times. I can appreciate that this is an evolving project. But what are the estimated capital costs of rebuilding a new Ontario Science Centre at Ontario Place?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Again, it would be our hope to go out to market.

I'll turn it over to Michael Lindsay.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: A consistent process that we use whenever we're going to bring a major capital project to market is to start first with pre-market consultation, even before it appears in our pipeline, to talk to the market about how they think about the optimal way to deliver an asset like this. It doesn't matter if it's the Ontario Science Centre or Highway 3 or the Ontario Line. Some of that's happening right now.

Work is absolutely continuing with the Ontario Science Centre itself to understand their operational needs, as well. If they're relocating, that's another important consideration and variable that goes into finalizing what the capital envelope that's going to house the Ontario Science Centre is ultimately going to be.

MPP, as you have rightly pointed out yourself, there are some thoughts about the integrative effect of various elements like the parking structure and Ontario Science Centre, and how that influences the capital project.

Again, the commitment that I would make—we know that we want to get to procurement and to market with this project quickly. Consistent with standard practice, we will, as part of the IO pipeline, at some point soon be disclosing an order of magnitude—a range—consistent with our practice, which we broadcast to the market as to what we think the design and construction cost of the facility is ultimately going to be. That's the work that's happening between now and then.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thirty seconds remaining.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The business plan that the science centre had released in 2019-20 was \$147.5 million. This is not going to cost less than that, from what I'm hearing, especially if it's integrated with a parking garage. Any thoughts, in 20 seconds?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I would offer only that the condition of the current facility at Don Mills is one that I

think is well understood to be very, very bad. The facility condition index is quite high. Millions of dollars are being expended every year in order to make sure that that building continues to meet code and can be operated. We've had recently—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry; your time is up for this round.

I will now go over to the government side for 20 minutes. MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Chair: I'm going to continue the conversation about Ontario Place, because I think it's significant. But initially, I just want to thank the minister and the entire team for being here. It's a collaborative effort that we appreciate.

My father used to say that you can't move forward without knowing what's behind you. I looked, actually, at some of the work that's being done at Corktown with the historic value—our original Parliament. It is so significant, and we appreciate keeping that forward and keeping that significant when we consider the generations coming ahead.

I should clarify: I was one of those people who was pushing a stroller with two children not too long ago. I frequented so many of the attractions—and I still do—in Ontario, because it is so significant. I actually have very fond memories of going to Ontario Place, probably one of my favourite places in the world. It was with great sadness—I brought my son there when he was still literally in diapers, in 2012. I think that was probably the year that it closed down. It was kind of sad for me to watch him go into the water; he was literally the last generation that did. When I was travelling on the highway the other day, I was looking over at the tower that exists now that used to carry the water park, and it's gone. People don't realize all of that is gone right now. It's not accessible. It's not usable by the public. It's sad. I was able to use a water park as a child. My son was just barely kind of able to use it.

This image that we have of Ontario Place really doesn't exist anymore. There's the Budweiser Stage, and it's fantastic. It is not, however, covered, so if you're in the rafters, so to speak, of the grass, you're probably rained upon. I've been rained upon at a few concerts. I'm sure my friends and colleagues can commiserate. We have these phenomenal memories of Ontario Place, but what we fail to remember is that we haven't been there lately, and there's a reason why we haven't been there lately, and there's a reason why I haven't brought my children down there, and that's literally because there's nothing to go to—other than possibly going there for a walk. It doesn't exist, which is kind of sad.

1320

Going back and talking about the best interest of the taxpayers—because that's ultimately why everybody in this room is here right now—what progress has Ontario made with the redevelopment of Ontario Place so that we can talk about the future? Going back to my father's statement—because I always like going back to my father.

Hon. Kinga Surma: That is a sentiment that's shared by, I would say, most Torontonians.

Many people who grew up in the GTA or surrounding area have attended—when I walk my dog, I often speak to my neighbours who have very, very fond memories of going there.

I would like to highlight a key point that you made: People aren't going there anymore because there aren't any activities to do with your family, friends and children, which is why the anchor tenants are so important. Now, instead of maybe just enjoying it in the summer predominantly, we can go to Ontario Place and enjoy it all year round because of the new stage, because of the wellness centre, because of the science centre. It will draw people there again. I think our vision has always been to bring it back to life, to make it a fun place where families can attend. When you have guests coming to Toronto or the GTA, visiting the country, the province, that's where you take them.

We've made significant progress in a very short period of time. We're eagerly awaiting the site servicing work to start. The site servicing work is really important because it will unlock the whole potential of the island—the underground infrastructure, the telecom, drinking water, electricity. Immediately after that, we'll start on the public realm space, and then Therme will begin their construction and their work.

We're doing everything we can to move forward. We are working with the city of Toronto. Even in a short period of time, we've managed to take a vision and really start construction in a number of days—weeks.

Ms. Laura Smith: How many jobs will be brought to the table as a result of this?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Including construction, 5,000, and we're looking at, potentially, 2,500 permanent jobs.

We can also speak to the fact that, with activities at Ontario Place, with all the things that happen at the Exhibition and the surrounding area, this will become a huge draw. This area, this region of Ontario Place and everything around it, will become a huge draw for people. So we certainly recognize that there will be economic benefits beyond just Ontario Place and the three anchor tenants.

Ms. Laura Smith: I appreciate that.

Michael, you talked about consultation that happened before making decisions to redevelop. Can you talk a little bit more about that—or whoever the qualified individual is.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Would you like to begin, Minister?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I can start—and then if Michael has anything to add.

Since we announced our vision for Ontario Place, which was back in 2019, we have had public consultations every single fall, every single spring. We've had virtual public consultations; we've had in-person. We've had online surveys where we've had thousands of participants. Of course, because this is a development application, the city of Toronto will be conducting their own public consultations. And then, through the strategic conservation plan and heritage impact assessment, there

has been consultation as part of that—consultation with First Nations communities, which is ongoing, through the environmental assessment work.

Let's just remember that we are not the first government that wanted to do something with Ontario Place. Governments before us have had consultations on this matter; there are records of that. We continue to consult, and we will continue to follow all of the requirements and processes that are required of us.

I don't know if I missed anything, Michael.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: No. I was just going to say, to your point, Minister, about previous consultations, that it's one of the most studied sites in Canada in respect of what should be done with it. That tangibly, then, got reflected in the call-for-development document that was broadcast to an international set of bidders. We not only specified what we were looking for; we specified what was not allowed: no underlying land sale, no residential developments—all of that deeply consistent with previous conclusions of consultations in connection with the future of Ontario Place.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you.

I'm now going to be sharing my time with my colleague Mr. Sabawy.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Sabawy, please go ahead.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Minister, Infrastructure Ontario is a key part of all the big infrastructure projects going on in Ontario. I think Ontarians depend on your infrastructure ministry to come up not only with the recreation centres and community activities, but more into infrastructure.

I have two questions for you. The first question is, how do you ensure that projects are delivered in time and on budget? I know, when talking about Mississauga—because I am the only member from Mississauga here—I can talk about the Hazel McCallion Line, the LRT, as well as the Mississauga hospital, the biggest hospital in Ontario. I think, from the feedback I'm getting from both projects, that they are on time. I already start seeing the rails in the street, which is very nice to see; all the crossings are already in place. I pass by that every day, and I'm just monitoring the development myself to see things are going. How can you put measures into the projects to make sure that they are delivered in time and on budget—especially since we have some examples of projects that have gone sideways from previous experiences, and we still hear issues about them.

My second part of the question would be: How can we also make sure that we have enough of a budget for maintaining the current infrastructure we have? Without money to keep it up to speed, it's going to deteriorate. So we need to make sure that whatever we build, we maintain, and that we keep an eye on that and make it usable as long as we can.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Those are two very good questions.

We just went through a very difficult time for three years. Obviously, that had impacts on the construction sector and on the work that IO and MOI have to do. But I

think what's really important and something that we recognize is that we continued to build throughout COVID. Provincial priority projects continued to build—the West Park hospital and health care centre continued construction during COVID, during that difficult time, as did Macdonald Block, as did other large infrastructure projects. Of course, we listened to the medical professionals and chief medical officer. We made sure work sites were safe, but we continued on, because we knew how important building hospitals and long-term care and schools and transit was during that time. We engaged in a dialogue with our builders about what was happening on the ground and the challenges they were facing—and that comes back to the three of us and to our teams.

This is a constant exercise in our ministry—of what we can do to keep standards high and constantly improve standards, and what can we do to make sure that we can execute on that project faster and quicker.

You know very well, MPP Sabawy, that we presented several pieces of legislation in the House to help construct things or to ease some of the barriers and the burdens—three pieces of legislation to help with high-speed Internet connection, the Building Transit Faster Act and the Transit-Oriented Communities Act. So that exercise is constantly happening. Then, of course, selecting the right model for the project is pretty important.

1330

In terms of the maintenance piece, Infrastructure Ontario evaluates as to whether or not to include maintenance in our P3 projects, whether we find it beneficial, and then we go out to market. Those recommendations come to us and to government.

Of course, in many cases we work with our capital ministries. When we build a new hospital, the Ministry of Health has their input and works with us. Then, of course, when we give funding to municipalities for projects, whether it's federal and provincial dollars, there's a whole reporting system. Our job is to make sure that that facility is built, then the recipient of those provincial and federal dollars will usually be the one maintaining it. It truly depends on which project you speak of, but our job is to make sure it's built and to work with our partner ministries on the maintenance piece.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Just a small follow-up question, again, in regard to on-time and on-budget delivery: Are there any lessons learned from some of those projects that went sideways? We modified our model to make sure that if it happened again we have some way to accelerate. That's my question. I just needed to clarify that.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Experience with past projects was what led to the Building Transit Faster Act—the permitting, the corridor works. We had a sense of things that traditionally took a very long period of time that we thought should take a more reasonable period of time. Therefore we presented that legislation. We're doing the same thing on high-speed Internet. This is a constant exercise.

We're currently, at the ministry, exploring other things that we're hearing from the market, and in the appropriate time we will share that information.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: I just have two comments MPP. The first is, we're proud of our track record: 140 projects assigned to Infrastructure Ontario, 82 of those are now complete; 68% of those projects have been delivered on time; 94% of those projects have been delivered on budget, which is a record that I would put up against even private sector major capital organizations.

To use a very concrete example, sir, you offered one of the Mississauga Hospital and the Hurontario LRT. To the minister's excellent point: One of the key lessons that we learned was, when you try to build a hospital immediately next to an active LRT project, you better have a progressive form of project design so that you can talk to your counterparty about what constructability risks you're going to run into as those two major sites are operating in close proximity to one another. To give you one tangible example that will resonate—that's a good one.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Holland, please.

Mr. Kevin Holland: MPP Sabawy's question is a good segue into what I wanted to ask you about today. As you know, I come from a municipal background, having been the mayor of my community for 31 years. Over those three decades of being mayor, we advocated to the government for funds to help maintain infrastructure in our communities. We saw infrastructure funding come out that was more geared for legacy projects, adding infrastructure costs and maintenance costs to municipalities, without providing the funds to help maintain the existing infrastructure. It has been a challenge, especially for a lot of the smaller communities.

The introduction of the asset management plan in 2015, and then rolled out in 2018, really set the foundation and the groundwork for municipalities to identify what their infrastructure needs were moving forward—as well as maintaining the existing. It really can be an effective tool to help municipalities and the province address the increasing infrastructure needs and maintenance costs of Ontario and our municipalities.

I have two questions. What is the asset management planning regulation—if you could just explain why it's important in assisting municipalities and, as well, where we're at in the progress on the asset management plan.

Hon. Kinga Surma: As mayor, you would have some experience in that field, I would imagine, so feel free to correct me if I'm wrong.

You're very wise in mentioning the asset management plans, something that I haven't spoken about in this particular meeting very much, but of great importance. The ministry wants to make sure that we have good, concrete evidence in front of us, particularly when we're responsible for redistributing \$30 billion worth of Investing in Canada Infrastructure dollars. We want to know where the needs are for what type of infrastructure, perhaps where municipalities are finding the greatest challenge, and so we've been working with municipalities

on their asset management plans. We've been communicating with them. We've set up workshops with them. We have established timelines. Their next reporting in period will be July—spring-early summer—of 2024, and then again with final documentation due in 2025. From our perspective, it helps us execute those dollars, and it also helps us understand where the challenges lie, particularly if we're in a position where we kind of are today and lobbying the federal government for additional dollars. It's good to know truly where municipalities need that investment.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I appreciate that—

Hon. Kinga Surma: Oh, and my deputy will expand on my answer.

Ms. Carlene Alexander: I'm Carlene Alexander, deputy minister of the Ministry of Infrastructure. I just wanted to add to all the excellent points that the minister just made.

We also will be using the asset management plans to inform the OCIF allocations. That's really important, as well, to make sure we are utilizing those dollars in an optimal manner.

It's also important to note that we've recently made a change in working with municipalities, to use the current replacement value of the assets rather than looking at historical value, so then we have a more accurate base upon which we can look at what would it take to replace those assets, what's needed to maintain them etc., and it helps to inform those OCIF allocations even better.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you for that, because that was going to be my question—it was with regard to using the plan to have the flexibility in our infrastructure funding announcements to meet the needs of our communities.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There are only 40 seconds left, so—

Mr. Kevin Holland: I could sing a song.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Harris, did you want to—

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm not going to have much time to ask a question. But thank you all for being here.

Carlene, it's nice to see you.

I did want to just touch quickly on some of the broadband expansion. I think this is the last round of questions. I'm just coming into this now, so I don't know if there's anything you want to say in 20 seconds on that, about SWIFT.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Just that our most recent announcement was providing the public access to our high-speed Internet map. That was something we worked on for long period of time. As you can imagine, all of those projects, all of those premises—a lot of data. We're happy to have a place where constituents can go to find information first-hand about the Internet service provider that will be connecting their community, and it will be constantly updated.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP French has a question.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Seeing as how our colleagues from the independent sector have not spent all of their

time—it's my understanding in past practice of various committees, there has been a friendly agreement, if the minister is up for it, of dividing questions or continuing. Is that something that is an opportunity? Since they are leaving time on the clock, no one wants to waste it.

Hon. Kinga Surma: They must have been satisfied with the presentation.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): So is the member asking for—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, I would be glad to take all of their time, but I thought I might meet with some resistance.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Do you want to ask for unanimous consent to share the remaining time?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would be very glad to ask for unanimous consent that we share the independent members' time.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): So that would be five minutes each—if all parties were agreed to. There are 10 minutes remaining, so it would be five minutes each side—but we would all have to agree.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I think we're good.

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, I think it's fine.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay, so we have unanimous consent to have five minutes assigned to the official opposition and the government party.

Mr. Mike Harris: We need to go first.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): No. We're going to the official opposition for the first five minutes.

MPP French, you're up.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I will continue what MPP Harris started about broadband. I may go in a slightly different direction—

Mr. Mike Harris: No, that's not how this works.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Ah, fun. Okay.

Minister, regarding broadband, according to the public accounts, the government spent only 3.6% of its \$405.6-million broadband budget in 2021-22, only 1.37% of its broadband budget in 2020-21, and zero the year before that. So that's four straight years in which the government hasn't spent the vast majority of its broadband budget—because, as we see in this estimates, interim actuals for rural broadband infrastructure is \$76.7 million, which is just 11% of last year's \$693-million budget.

1340

We are all excited about broadband and really want to see this happen.

Can the government explain this pattern of under-spending on broadband so we can be clear on those numbers?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Yes, I'll address this—and then if my deputy has anything to add.

So 700,000 premises is a lot of premises. That is a massive number. A big part of our work at the ministry is making sure that we award the appropriate Internet service provider with the work, and we've done that through several programs. We had ICON, we had our partnership with the federal government, and we completed the reverse auction. Now we're working on the last mile.

Throughout that period of time, we have to enter into transfer payment agreements with our Internet service providers. We have to verify the data. It is a process that is followed because we want to make sure that everything is accurate. Then, of course, payment occurs during construction milestones that are reached. Those are obligations that exist within the contracts with our Internet service providers. We want to make sure that—whomever is awarded the contract for the work—the work is completed and that the Internet connection to our standard exists afterwards. If there are fluctuations, which we anticipate there will be—because now, in many cases, construction is under way in approximately 100 of the 200 projects; we will see a rise in those numbers. Again, you may be familiar with the reverse auction and that procurement that took place which connected approximately 250,000 premises; we have 40,000 to 60,000 more to go, which we're working on diligently, and we'll be sharing information very soon on our progress.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Everyone in the province wants this to be successful, so we're watching the numbers. They're hard to follow when we don't see them, so having a bit more understanding is appreciated. We will all watch with interest as it unfolds.

Speaking of numbers and having interest—the East Harbour transit-oriented community is owned by Cadillac Fairview. I thought that the whole point of the transit-oriented communities was to get developers to pay for new transit stations so that the province isn't—in exchange for up-zoning or development rights. On page 56 of the estimates briefing book, we see a \$333-million capital expense related to that. Why are we giving this private developer \$333 million for this project? Please explain.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I would be happy to.

East Harbour is one of our largest transit-oriented communities, projects, acreage—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Fifty-five seconds left.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Nonetheless, there is a level of infrastructure need on the site pertaining to municipal roads, pertaining to flood work that needs to occur in order for us to unlock the site. That is what the dollars will be used for. That was negotiated with the city of Toronto, Cadillac Fairview and the province of Ontario.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The money is being spent but not handed to them?

Hon. Kinga Surma: The money is being spent on infrastructure and to unlock the site for redevelopment and for the transit construction.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Thank you, Minister. I would add that, per the terms of the agreement that we have with Cadillac Fairview, and in negotiation and agreement with the city of Toronto, it is in fact Cadillac Fairview that is making a significant capital contribution to required infrastructure at the site on the order of \$300 million. What has happened is that we have had a discussion with the city of Toronto about how to assign that value to defray the cost of infrastructure at the site—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry; the time is up.

MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'll get to ask my question a little more fulsome now—I want to talk a little bit about SWIFT.

I know that both myself and Mr. Leardi, who's sitting next to me here, obviously have a great interest in what's happening in broadband in southwestern Ontario.

At the time that all of these funds were announced, I think a little over 50,000, maybe 60,000 premises were not connected in southwestern Ontario.

I was hoping you could give me a little bit more information about what the ministry's relationship is with SWIFT, some of the funding that has been allocated, and where you see things moving forward as we're now into the next fiscal year.

Hon. Kinga Surma: The province made a contribution to SWIFT, as you know, to the tune of \$63 million. We have a very good partnership with SWIFT. In fact, when I was first appointed to be the Minister of Infrastructure, I relied very heavily on SWIFT, meeting with them, speaking to them on a regular basis, hearing their advice in terms of developing a high-speed Internet strategy across the province, understanding that we had approximately 700,000 premises to connect. So their project has been quite successful, and their input has contributed to our overall strategy. I'm very grateful for their partnership.

Mr. Mike Harris: I don't know if you had anything else you wanted to add.

Hon. Kinga Surma: No, but if my deputy does—

Interjection.

Hon. Kinga Surma: That was not discreet at all. I think the deputy is just pretty pleased with the number of projects that are completed at this point in time.

Ms. Carlene Alexander: I just wanted to add that, to date, 69 of the 97 SWIFT projects have been completed—and that brings the number of high-speed Internet access in that area to 51,000 homes and businesses. I just wanted to give you those figures.

Mr. Mike Harris: That's great news. I know that it has been a big bone of contention in southwestern Ontario for a long time. It has sort of been thought of as backwoods Ontario, even though it's really not. It's one of the leading economic drivers and sectors in the province. We've seen so much investment come in, in the last little while. It's critical as we move forward with modern farming—obviously, seeing large-scale industrial coming into the area—that we have connectivity. It's good to see that those investments are being made, and I'm glad you're able to provide a little more background on it.

If there's a little bit of time left, I'll pass it over to one of my colleagues.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's two and a half minutes left.

MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Minister, for the answers.

I will follow a little bit more into the high-speed Internet. As you know, that infrastructure and getting providers to invest money in the northern areas, where the density is not there, is a challenge because of the calculations with ROI. I'm just referring back to my background in technology and working with service providers in some parts of my life. I know that it's very tough to convince them to put the investments to get this infrastructure because the return of that is in 20 or 25 years, which is not what they look for.

So my question for you is: What can the ministry do to remove some of the red tape, those different regulatory boundaries which basically obstruct the providers from even thinking about getting into this market because of all the restrictions around it? What's your plan to get some of this red tape removed so that we can get those providers—convince them to go and spend the money to build that infrastructure?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final minute.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I think our latest improvements to the process would have been included in the red tape bill that Minister Gill recently presented in the House. I think we're having that discussion with Internet service providers through Infrastructure Ontario right now. They are consulting with Internet service providers that participated in the reverse auction and generally have a market here in Ontario to understand what the barriers were. We take their feedback and incorporate it in our last-mile strategy, so that nobody is left behind. So that feedback is being collected by Infrastructure Ontario and is guiding our ministry.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Do we have any oversight on local providers in those northern areas—because it would be more privileged as well as encouraged to supply services like that?

Mr. Michael Lindsay: Yes, sir. We've created a technical assistance team for local municipalities in remote areas, and we have a Broadband One Window platform that allows, at a glance, to see what permitting activity is happening in those areas. We are trying quite actively to help local municipalities.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That concludes our time.

Thank you very much for coming to committee.

This concludes the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Standing order 69 requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. Are the members ready to vote?

Shall vote 4001, ministry administration, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. The motion is, accordingly, carried.

Shall vote 4003, infrastructure policy planning and projects, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. The motion is, accordingly, carried.

Shall vote 4006, government real estate, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed,

please raise your hand. The motion is, accordingly, carried.

Shall vote 4007, infrastructure partnership projects and agency, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. The motion is, accordingly, carried.

Shall the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. The motion is, accordingly, carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. The motion is, accordingly, carried.

We are just going to take a recess for 10 minutes and then resume with transportation.

Thank you so much to the ministry and your officials.
The committee recessed from 1352 to 1402.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The second ministry scheduled for consideration is the Ministry of Transportation. I'm required to call vote 2701, which sets the review process in motion.

We will begin with a statement of not more than 20 minutes from the Minister of Transportation.

Minister, welcome, and you may begin.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Good afternoon, everyone. It's a privilege to be here this afternoon to discuss the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation for the fiscal year 2023-24.

The Ministry of Transportation traces its roots back over 100 years. It was first established as the Department of Public Highways in 1916 under Premier William Hearst and its first minister, Findlay MacDiarmid. The ministry was tasked with establishing a provincial highway network, and the first highway, the King's Highway 2, was assumed in 1917. By 1920, the network had been established, and the minister was responsible for several hundred kilometres of new highways.

Today, after over a century of growth, the Ministry of Transportation is now responsible for managing and supporting more than 40,000 lane kilometres of provincial highways, including approximately 3,200 bridges. The ministry operates 28 airports, one registered aerodrome in the remote north, and operates or supports 11 ferry services. The ministry also oversees the licensing of more than 10.5 million drivers and the registration of 9.7 million vehicles, all while supporting 108 municipal transit systems serving 143 communities and reaching more than 90% of Ontarians.

The ministry oversees three crown agencies: Metrolinx, the ONTC, and the Owen Sound Transportation Co.

The reach and responsibility of the ministry is vast. It touches the lives of every single Ontarian every single day. Because of this, it is critical that we have a transportation network that reaches everyone—one that is safe, reliable and efficient and ensures the smooth movement of people

and goods as we build a province with a globally competitive and prosperous economy. The need for this has only become more critical as Ontario has grown.

As large as Ontario is today, it will continue to grow. Every year, approximately 200,000 more people choose to call Ontario home—that's one million new people every five years. By 2043, the population of Ontario is anticipated to grow to 19 million people. This growth is a remarkable vote of confidence in our province and the opportunities that it offers to people—opportunities to pursue one's dreams, to start a family, to build a legacy. A reliable transportation system sits at the heart of that.

I'm extremely proud to be a part of a government with a clear plan for building a stronger Ontario, and to lead a ministry making historic investments in the provincial transportation network. These investments will ensure the smooth movement of people and goods, even as our province grows at historic rates.

Unfortunately, Ontario is playing catch-up in its transportation expansion plans. Delaying, dithering and inaction under previous governments have meant that our transportation system is not where we would like it to be. Previous governments flip-flopped on priorities, leaving critical projects unfunded, ignored or, worse, cancelled. The effects of those decisions are felt across the province, perhaps nowhere more so than here in the greater Golden Horseshoe. Dangerously overcrowded subway platforms, packed trains, congested roads and highways—one doesn't have to spend much time here to know that it is a struggle to move around this region.

According to the INRIX global traffic scorecard for 2022, Toronto ranks as the seventh-most congested city in the entire world, and the average Toronto driver lost 118 hours, or nearly five days, sitting in traffic this past year alone. This translates into missed meetings, missed deadlines or, worse, missed dinners and missed bedtimes.

According to the C.D. Howe Institute, the greater Golden Horseshoe loses \$11 billion in productivity each year as a result of gridlock. Unless we act today, things will only get worse. We cannot afford to let that happen.

Since taking office, we have focused on tackling the infrastructure deficit that Ontario faces because previous governments failed to build. We're delivering the largest capital plan in Ontario's history, with an investment of almost \$99 billion over the next 10 years to build the infrastructure that Ontarians need. This includes over \$3 billion this year for the expansion and repair of the province's highways, roads and bridges.

These investments include continuing the next phase of construction for the new Highway 7, which will improve travel times between Kitchener and Guelph, and expanding and rehabbing the QEW Garden City Skyway with a new twin bridge over the Welland Canal.

We are taking the next steps to build the Morriston Bypass, a new alignment that will enhance Highway 6 between Guelph and Hamilton, easing congestion for drivers along Highway 6 and the 401.

We're getting shovels in the ground on the reconstruction of Highway 101 in Timmins to help make travel easier and faster.

By widening Highway 3 from Essex to Leamington, we are delivering on our promise to make travel easier and safer for the thousands of people who depend on this roadway each day.

We continue to make progress on the widening and twinning of Highway 17 between Kenora and the Manitoba border.

We are also making progress to widen Highways 11 and 17 from two to four lanes between Thunder Bay and Nipigon.

Our plan also includes the construction of Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass.

The need for these projects was identified more than a decade ago—in the 1970s, in the case of the Bradford Bypass. The 413 will connect York, Peel and Halton regions, offering new alternatives for people travelling to their destinations while relieving congestion along Highway 401, one of the busiest highways in North America. Drivers using the 413 will save about 30 minutes each way during their rush-hour commutes. That means more time spent doing the things that we enjoy and less time staring at the back of a car in front of us. Similarly, the Bradford Bypass will connect the 400 and the 404, saving drivers up to approximately 35 minutes and relieving the pressure and the congestion on local roads.

Roads and highways are just one aspect of our plans for an improved transportation network in Ontario; public transit is another.

Over the next 10 years, we will invest more than \$70.5 billion in a generational transformation of public transit in this province. This includes our priority transit projects in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area: the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, the Yonge North subway extension, the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, and the Hamilton LRT project. Since the first four of these projects were announced in 2019, we have broken ground on the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension. We recently reached a milestone on the Yonge North subway extension, and planning work continues on the Hamilton LRT. These priority transit projects add to the important projects that are already under way—projects like the 11-kilometre Finch West LRT and the 18-kilometre-long Hazel McCallion line, both of which will provide rapid and more frequent connections between communities in the greater Toronto area.

Last spring, we awarded a contract to ONxpress, a consortium that will advance our work to modernize and transform the GO network in a two-way, all-day, 15-minute service over core segments of the rail network, enabling more choice and freedom for riders. ONxpress will add more than 200 kilometres of new track, electrify more than 600 kilometres of existing track, and introduce a new electric train fleet that can reach top speeds of 140 kilometres per hour. This transformation is combined with exploring ways to bring faster and more frequent service

on the Kitchener GO corridor—including to London—provide more service on the Milton corridor, expand service to the Niagara region, and extend commuter rail service to Bowmanville. This means that we will have more trains running more frequently to more places, making public transit a more convenient and affordable option for more people travelling not just to and from the office, but for all aspects of their lives, be it for a night out, visiting family, running errands or attending appointments.

1410

The benefits of these transit projects will be enjoyed for generations, not just because of the improved connections, but because every \$1 billion invested in transit supports 10,000 jobs and boosts Ontario's gross domestic product by another \$1 billion. And we can experience the positive effects of our historic investments in transit even before they become operational. The construction of the priority transit projects in the GTA will create more than 16,000 skilled and well-paying jobs each year—that's 16,000 families who will benefit immediately, bringing with it additional benefits for local economies.

As important as it is for us to build for the future to create new opportunities for new generations, it is just as important that we work to take care of what we have today. We have done that in three ways: by reducing expenses related to travel for millions of Ontarians; by renewing our focus on road safety; and by supporting public transit systems across the province to continue their essential operations throughout the pandemic.

While we look to create economic prosperity tomorrow, we need to recognize that life today has become more expensive, and we need to look for ways for people to keep more of their own money. To that end, we removed the tolls from Highways 412 and 418 and committed to not tolling any new or existing highways. We eliminated licence plate renewal fees and licence plate stickers, making life a little easier and a little less expensive for nearly eight million drivers. And we are making it more affordable, easier and more convenient for families and workers to travel across the greater Golden Horseshoe by eliminating double fares for most local transit when using GO Transit services. These burden and cost reductions will provide tangible benefits to millions of Ontarians at a time of rising inflation.

Ontario has a strong record when it comes to road safety. We consistently rank amongst the top five jurisdictions in North America when it comes to having the safest roads. But road safety is never finished. There is always more to be done.

Over the last four years, we have studied the province's road safety measures and taken steps to improve them when needed. For instance, in response to the rise of high-risk driving and ongoing violence in the towing industry during the pandemic, we introduced, and the Legislature passed, the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, 2021, and the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act, 2021. Both of these pieces of legislation were motivated by a desire to protect law-abiding road users and to crack down on bad actors; to that end, the MOMS Act achieves

this through longer driver's licence suspensions and longer vehicle impoundment periods for drivers who engage in stunt driving, street racing and aggressive driving.

The Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act will strengthen provincial oversight of the towing and vehicle storage sectors to reduce crime and fraud, create a level playing field for the industry and promote road safety. Most of all, it will give people confidence that when they're waiting by the side of the road for a tow, a capable and reputable tow truck driver will be there to help them and get to a safe place.

As I say, the work of ensuring our roads are the safest they can be is never done. Road safety is a non-partisan issue. That is why I hope this committee will call Bill 15 for study, and I look forward to a future debate on Bill 40.

Public transit is an essential service, relied upon by Ontarians every week to get from place to place. For many, it is their primary means of transportation. That became acutely apparent early in the pandemic. While so many of us did our part by staying home, the front-line heroes of the pandemic—the nurses and the paramedics, those who kept hospitals clean and patients fed, and those who worked in essential industries—needed the buses, subways and trains to keep running. To keep the system running, we provided more than \$2 billion through four phases of the Safe Restart Agreement to help ensure municipal transit systems could continue to deliver safe and reliable transit services. The Safe Restart Agreement was a temporary fund designed to provide support to municipal transit systems at a time when fare revenue cratered. The most recent phase, issued in December 2022, provided up to \$505 million to municipal transit systems, and was the fourth and final phase. As a result, you will see a corresponding decrease of approximately \$639 million in vote 2702 for agency oversight partnerships.

Other changes to which I'd like to draw your attention—a \$79-million decrease in the transportation safety division. This change is the result of the elimination of the val tag fees, as well as moving the dry run card-production services to the newly established oversight and agency governance division, which sees a \$74-million increase from the 2022-23 estimates. Finally, the operations division sees a \$31.2-million increase due to increased planning spending on winter highway maintenance, ferry services, remote air staffing and accounting standards adjustments.

Overall, the estimates of the ministry reflect what is necessary to continue our transportation network's safe and efficient operation, while making the expansions essential to enable future growth and prosperity. We are confident in our plans. They are being developed with local and regional input, while ensuring the necessary connections and links with neighbouring communities and regions of this province to allow people to get where they need to go safely and quickly.

We are making historic investments in public transit that will provide new opportunities for the millions of people who call the greater Golden Horseshoe home today and in the future. We are continuing to build and expand

our highway network, ensuring that goods can get to market and reducing the time that drivers have to spend behind the wheel of a car while stuck in gridlock. And we are continuing to look for ways to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario. In these ways, the Ministry of Transportation lies at the forefront of Ontario's prosperity agenda.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Minister.

We will now begin questions and answers in rotations of 20 minutes for the official opposition members of the committee, 10 minutes for the independent member of the committee, and 20 minutes for the government members of the committee for the remainder of the allotted time.

As always, please wait to be recognized by myself before speaking. All questions and comments will need to go through the Chair.

For the deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and staff: When you are called on to speak, please give your name and your title each time so that we have an accurate record in Hansard of who we have.

I will start with the official opposition. MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Minister, it's nice to see you today.

Most of the questions I have this afternoon will be about some transit issues and questions we have around the estimates.

I just want to say off the top that it was heartening to hear your comments about road safety being a non-partisan issue. I wholeheartedly agree, and I'm glad to hear that Bill 40 may see the light of day at this committee. It's something that not just me but many parliamentarians have worked on.

I'll invite you and all members of this committee—we're organizing, Chair, a bicycle ride from Ottawa to Toronto in mid-September to promote road safety. That's open to everyone. That's certainly open to the community.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm going.

Mr. Joel Harden: My colleague from Oshawa is going to be there for part of it. So stay tuned for that. And it was great to hear that.

Let's talk about the Eglinton Crosstown. In April, Metrolinx said that there were 260 deficiencies that had to be addressed with this LRT project. What I'd like from the minister is an opportunity to provide a written summary, some kind of written note that we could use for analysis of these deficiencies, as well as an assessment of the severity of each one of those 260 deficiencies. Is that information you can share with us or take back to the ministry to procure for us?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: That's something I'll look into.

From the information that I've received from the ministry and from conversations I've had with people who have been involved in transit construction here in Canada, but also around the world, deficiencies are commonplace as a construction company is handing over a system, and these are things that get rectified over time. While deficiencies must be addressed, they're not uncommon.

1420

At a press conference that was held for, I think it was the RFQ, the Yonge North subway extension, Phil Verster, the CEO of Metrolinx, highlighted the deficiencies that had been identified and talked about the work that was ongoing between Metrolinx and Crosslinx to address those deficiencies. Those are very technical issues—and I might turn it to the deputy minister and assistant deputy minister to discuss the technical elements, to see if this is something that we can provide. Otherwise, what I will say is that it is not uncommon for this to happen on transit systems, and these issues get rectified—

Mr. Joel Harden: I apologize for interrupting you, Minister. What I'll look forward to on the technical side is some of the information that we can then just parse through with some research.

Further to that and Mr. Verster's comments at that press conference you were talking about, the Toronto Sun reported, coming out of that press conference, that Metrolinx has over 30,000 pages of documents—I'll just quote from the article—"relating to the issue of whether some rails for the Eglinton Crosstown project were properly installed and need to be fixed..."

Again, just at a high level, because I can't recall if any of us around this table are engineers; I don't think we are—can you just say at a broad level, does the rail system for this project need to be fixed and, if it does, what are we looking at? Are we looking at delays in the manner of weeks, months, years, specifically on the issue of improperly installed rails?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: On the issue of the rails: That's one of the deficiencies that was addressed. It is part of a list of deficiencies that the engineers are looking at, and they will be rectified. In terms of the timeline, as you know, safety is the number one issue, so we've got to make sure that it gets rectified to the standards that Metrolinx expects and had agreed to when it entered into the contract. I might ask Felix, as it's more of an engineering question. I can't speak with more specificity than that.

Mr. Felix Fung: I'm happy to answer. I'm Felix Fung. I'm the assistant deputy minister for transit here at the Ministry of Transportation.

MPP Harden, you had asked about the tracks. As you know, we're in the testing and commissioning phase now for the Eglinton Crosstown project. Part of that testing and commissioning is to inspect the infrastructure that has been built. The tracks had started installation almost two years ago and reached completion. As part of that inspection, they're going through track by track to inspect whether they think they have been built correctly. That's where we're at—

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you. All apologies, sir; we have a limited amount of time, and I need to get through a number of questions.

Mr. Felix Fung: No worries.

Mr. Joel Harden: I appreciate that.

Just following up here more around the relationship between what the Auditor General has published and studies on this project and the estimates that we're looking

at today—in the Auditor General’s 2020 report on the Eglinton Crosstown project here, she warned that Crosslinx, the contractor for this project, was, in her words, “building at risk.” What this meant was that Crosslinx was going ahead with the construction before its designs were approved. That’s important, I believe, for the record, for us to understand in looking at these estimates. At the time of her 2020 report, the AG said there were 380 rejected designs, but, despite this, Crosslinx was continuing to build at risk. Crosslinx evidently, according to the Auditor General, was unafraid of any consequences and, sure enough, they pretty much didn’t face any at the time. The AG said that Metrolinx could have issued non-conformance reports, holding the contractor, Crosslinx, accountable, but did not do so except in one single case.

The question I would have—through you, Chair—for the minister is, why didn’t Metrolinx or the ministry take proper action after learning that Crosslinx was building the Eglinton Crosstown using rejected designs?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I would say that we accept the recommendations of the Auditor General. Metrolinx receives them. The work that Metrolinx has done with the consortium over the last few years has been an iterative one, and so there is a good relationship between Crosslinx and Metrolinx. So, with respect to designs—and, again, that is a very technical element of the project—Metrolinx has worked closely with Crosslinx to make sure that the designs that are presented align with Metrolinx’s view of what had been agreed to in the project agreement.

Mr. Joel Harden: Further to the issue of Crosslinx and the contractor in this particular project, my understanding, based on publicly available information, is that Crosslinx is entitled to interim payments from Metrolinx as the construction proceeds.

Through you, Chair: I would like to know from the minister, how much has actually already been paid out at this stage to Crosslinx? What payment is Crosslinx still theoretically entitled to with respect to the construction phase of the P3 contract?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: At this point, Crosslinx is related to payments due to it upon substantial completion of the project and revenue service.

Mr. Joel Harden: How much time do I have left, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Twelve minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thinking about this from a different perspective, the same project, is it possible—I’ll ask the minister, through you, Chair—that the cost to Crosslinx of finishing the project may be higher than whatever payments Metrolinx still might owe under the P3 contract?

There was a famous industrialist, J. Paul Getty, who once said, “If you owe the bank \$100, that’s your problem. If you owe the bank \$100 million, that’s the bank’s problem.” We can see the issue of risk coming up in a quotation like that. I’m wondering if it applies in this situation.

Similarly, if the Eglinton Crosstown has one or two deficiencies, that’s Crosslinx’s problem. But, as we’ve

already heard in the debate over the estimates this afternoon and in publicly available information, we know there are 260 deficiencies right now in this project, possibly including a defective rail system that could cost a significant amount of money. It sounds, to me at least, like this is Metrolinx’s problem, which means it’s all of our problem—it’s the public’s problem; it’s Ontario’s problem.

My question to the minister is, is there a risk that Crosslinx might just walk away and abandon the project if Metrolinx doesn’t bail the P3 contractor out again?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: While costs have certainly increased on projects in Ontario and around the world, in this project cost increases are to be borne by the contractor. That’s part of the agreement. I can’t speak to how Crosslinx will behave in the future. That’s a hypothetical question. But under the terms of the agreement, they will bear those cost overruns.

As I said, payments due to the consortium will come on the achievement of certain key milestones, and those have been set out in the contract.

Mr. Joel Harden: In my capacity as transit critic for the province, I’ve received a lot of correspondence from residents about Metrolinx itself. People have a number of concerns.

In preparing for committee today, I took a look at the sunshine list for 2022 and counted the number of Metrolinx vice-presidents. Believe it or not, Chair, there are 59—59—vice-presidents in this company, and 19 Metrolinx, as we say in the industry, C-suite executives, with the word “chief” in their title, like chief executive officer, chief operating officer, chief capital officer and so on. At the moment, for example, Metrolinx has four different chief operating officers with different areas of jurisdiction, which is interesting because, from what I can tell after queries from the public and my own research, much of Metrolinx’s operations has actually been outsourced to private contractors, without a lot engineering capacity on its staff.

Does the minister think, at a high level, that Metrolinx needs 19 C-suite executives as well as 59 vice-presidents?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: First, I’ll comment on one of the comments that you made, which was that Metrolinx outsourced all this work to contractors.

Metrolinx employees do a tremendous amount of work on all our different projects across its portfolio of projects. It has a number of executives who are delivering on some of the largest transit plans anywhere in North America or even around the world. We need to have highly qualified, highly trained and specialized people to deliver on those projects. I will also say that this kind of a background is, as I said, specialized and in huge demand from around the world. I think that we have a great team that is delivering on our priorities. I’m sure you agree that if we could continue to build more transit, that’s what we should do, so we need to know that the team we have here in Ontario delivering on these projects, which are highly technical and highly specialized and not easy to deliver, is the best team that we can have. I think they’ve put together, on all the different lines and all the different projects, a group of

executives who are tasked with delivering it, and we have confidence in them.

1430

Mr. Joel Harden: Further to that question, Chair—and do I have about eight minutes left? That would be my guess.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You do.

Mr. Joel Harden: Sometimes, as I understand it, some of the folks who work as executives at Metrolinx aren't even captured by the research I've talked about—the 59 vice-presidents, the 19 C-suite executives. Sometimes contractors are hired and then those contractors become vice-presidents—case in point is Mr. Brian Guest, whose name comes up, as the minister knows, in our public inquiry that we worked on with the government to begin to understand the problems in Ottawa's light rail transit system.

We know that Mr. Guest, for example, was a vice-president of Metrolinx. We know that in January of last year, the minister shared the concerns of the opposition with a significant amount of money paid to Mr. Guest and his firm Boxfish, because this person was involved in a lot of the core infrastructure work of our failing LRT in Ottawa. At the time, the minister said that Mr. Guest was going to be investigated. I understood from debate in the House that Mr. Guest has been investigated. The challenge I'm having from a critic's perspective is—I've requested, through access to information, a copy of that report investigating Mr. Guest. The response we got from the information officer was, "No records can be found."

My question to the minister is, can the opposition get a copy of the report of the investigation into Mr. Guest? If that is the case, when can we expect a copy of the investigation—or was it a verbal investigation? More details about that would be helpful.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, I'll say one thing on that: An internal review was done.

With respect to the estimates and the financial elements of consultant work, which is, I think, at the core of your question and really relates to the estimates process—Metrolinx will outsource some of the work to consultants, as required, when we need a certain specialized set of skills. When that work has been provided, those consultancies terminate, so they're no longer part of the project. That has allowed Metrolinx, across all of its different projects, to upscale in terms of the kinds of skills that it has available to it and then adapt through the life of the project so that we have the right people in place doing the right kind of work. That's why we have consultants across our different projects.

Mr. Joel Harden: Chair, I want to pose the question another time, just out of respect to the work of the committee and to the minister and to you: Can we have a copy of any written evidence of an investigation into Mr. Guest for his role in the Eglinton Crosstown LRT? Can we get that information, as the opposition, so we can scrutinize and understand Mr. Guest's role in this project—a written copy of the investigation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As I said, a review was done internally, and it was concluded that everything with respect to the procurement that you're discussing of those services was fair and competitive.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm going to assume the answer to that is no. That's disappointing because I take your comments for what they are, Minister—that you've done your investigation, but the opposition needs to see the evidence that you saw too. We're certainly getting a lot of comments from the public in the absence of that information, and Mr. Guest's name keeps showing up in Justice Hourigan's report. His firm is a major concern to folks at home who want our transit system to work properly.

How much time do I have left, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Four and a half.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you very much.

I want to go back to the Auditor General and her assessment of Metrolinx. The Auditor General, in assessments of Metrolinx, has repeatedly flagged concerns about Metrolinx's overreliance on private consultants. She has pointed out that Metrolinx has even hired private consultants to manage other private consultants, with very little sense of accountability for performance—according to the Auditor General, not me.

My question to the minister, through you, Chair: How much money does Metrolinx spend each year on private consultants? Is there a list that is publicly available that we can procure, as the opposition, of these private consultants? And of all the people working on behalf of Metrolinx, how many of them are private consultants?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'll have to look into that.

As I said, I think that the outsourcing of certain elements of a project to consultants who have a degree of specialized training allows Metrolinx to do the work that's required on a certain element of a project, and then when we move away to the next phase of the project, they're no longer carrying those people as employees on the project. So I think it allows them, overall, to be more flexible in terms of their project budgets, and I think that's a key element when you're dealing with taxpayer dollars. It's a way to be more flexible and make sure that you're being more responsible.

Mr. Joel Harden: This is my fear with the reliance of Metrolinx on consultants for major infrastructure projects key to the success of Ontario: Costs are increasing massively. If we look at the Spadina extension that was completed a number of years ago versus the current Ontario Line subway, for the current Ontario Line subway, the stations closest to the proposed science centre that we were talking about earlier in debate this afternoon are costing a billion dollars per kilometre; that's nearly three times the per-kilometre cost of the Toronto-York Spadina subway extension. Transit researchers are telling me that that is in no way representative of increased costs of commodities, increased costs of fuel, labour—all the drivers that make construction costs increase.

My final question to the minister: I take your point about consultants being a flexible workforce, but are you

worried that Metrolinx's current reliance on 19 C-suite executives, 59 vice-presidents and an apparent army of embedded consultants is playing a role in driving up the cost of the transit we need to build for the province?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: No. I worry about inflation. I worry about the cost of steel. I worry about labour supply shortages. I have a lot of worries in terms of cost inputs into the projects that we have in transit and transportation across our government's infrastructure portfolio, because costs are rising around the world.

We do a tremendous amount of work at MTO, in conjunction with Infrastructure Ontario, to make sure, as we're moving forward with our procurements, that we're putting together packages that are manageable, that make sense to give us flexibility on price and on schedule. We want to make sure that we are delivering the best value for taxpayers possible in an environment of higher inflation than had been predicted when some of our projects were announced in the past decade.

So there certainly are increasing costs; I think no one would deny that. Those are a source—not of concern, but it's a topic of conversation with us every day. Managing those costs and finding the best way to do that is a big part of the work we are doing. So I think that is at the core of our cost concerns.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There are 20 seconds left, so—

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm happy to end here.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move on to the independent, MPP Blais, for 10 minutes.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you, Minister, and everyone for being here.

I think I'm going to continue in the transit domain and the Eglinton Crosstown. As I understood your answer to one of Mr. Harden's questions, there are two milestone payments remaining. There is substantial completion after commissioning and revenue service availability. Is that correct?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Just the substantial, not the revenue service. So we were at substantial completion.

Mr. Stephen Blais: So just substantial completion. And at that point, all payments to the consortia will have been made?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Yes. There will be claims that may need to be resolved. That's part of every project. But under the terms of the contract, that is the—

Mr. Stephen Blais: So are we able to, as a committee, receive what the standards and criteria are for determining substantial completion?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I have to look into that one. I'm not sure if it's a commercially sensitive element of the contract.

Mr. Stephen Blais: You mentioned or someone mentioned that the system is currently in testing and commissioning. Are we able to receive what the standards and evaluation process for testing and commissioning will be or are? Given that—

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm only pausing because it's a very technical issue and I don't know—I'll look into that one.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Okay. Last year, of course, you ordered the public inquiry in the city of Ottawa. I'm sure you've received and read fully Mr. Hourigan's report. You would agree that an important part of his conclusions—not just for the city of Ottawa, but for public procurement in the transit space and, I think, all public procurement—is openness and transparency to elected officials. It was a broad theme through that report. He specifically criticized the city and suggested remedies for the timely provision of information during testing and commissioning to elected officials.

I would hope that, in line with the commissioner's own recommendations, you would endeavour to provide this committee with similarly timed pieces of information about how commissioning is going.

1440

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Yes, and I will say, with respect to the justice's comments and recommendations on testing and commissioning, one of the elements he mentioned was—as I said yesterday; I used the word “interfering”—not interfering; making sure politicians don't interfere in that process, because it is such a technical and critical part of the project.

In the case of Ottawa, the shortening of the testing period was a key issue in the failure of the system, because they didn't have the time necessary to test the trains on those tracks. So that's why I say it's important that that testing and commissioning phase that has been worked out between the proponent and Metrolinx and the operator be allowed to run its course. I believe that it also can be an iterative process between the operator and the construction company. As they're training their trainers, training their operators on a new system, there may be different phases to that process. So that's my point with that. It can evolve.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Yes, I don't disagree with what you're saying.

How are we to judge if there is political interference or not if we don't know what the criteria is when it begins?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, I can assure you that I don't get involved in judging whether the criteria that they're using is the correct one or not. I'm not an engineer. I leave it to the experts on that. I think it's important that politicians do stay out of it and that we leave it to those who know how to operate and test systems to do that.

Mr. Stephen Blais: So who will be in charge of determining that the testing and commissioning criteria has been met?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, I'm going to turn to the deputy, but I would say Metrolinx and the TTC—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Metrolinx is an agency. Who is involved?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Metrolinx is an agency; the CEO is ultimately responsible. Also, the operator will be working with Metrolinx to set out the criteria and make sure that it has been met, because their employees will be operating the system.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Anything else to add? Okay.

You mentioned that there are deficiencies. Of course, in any construction project, there are deficiencies that need to be resolved.

Do you anticipate that 100% of deficiencies will be resolved before revenue service?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I assume, to Metrolinx's satisfaction, based on the contract it signed, that it will resolve the deficiencies that it has identified.

Mr. Stephen Blais: But will they be resolved before revenue service? Is that the commitment—to resolve all deficiencies before revenue service? Or is there a range of deficiencies that it's okay to start revenue service with?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: With all due respect, and I'm not being—it's such a technical question.

I would assume, as a layperson, that a deficiency will be rectified before a system goes into service, but there may be a category of deficiency that I'm not aware of.

When Mr. Verster talks about deficiencies, he's lumping them all in, so whether a light works on a train—whether he's lumping that in with rails, I don't know.

Mr. Stephen Blais: So at this point, is it fair to say that we don't know which deficiencies or which type of deficiencies are acceptable to begin revenue service with and that we aren't clear on who will make the determination on the safety and serviceability of the service?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: No, that's not the case. Metrolinx is fully aware of what the deficiencies are. They're going through them on a constant basis. So Metrolinx is fully aware, and there will be a full safety review of the system before it operates. There will be regulators involved and, as I said, our priorities—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Who is the regulator?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The MTO will be looking into it to make sure that it has met the safety requirements.

Mr. Stephen Blais: So has there been an independent safety officer or similar position established to review, independently of the consortium and, say, corporate Metrolinx, that the service is safe?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I think it's too early in the process. But I'll turn it to the deputy.

Mr. Doug Jones: I'm Deputy Jones.

We don't have that resource within the ministry itself. We rely on consultants, as well, to conduct that activity—

Mr. Stephen Blais: So has the procurement for that consultative service been issued yet?

Interjections.

Mr. Felix Fung: Sorry. I can speak a little bit about your question.

There are independent certifiers who go in and inspect, as part of the testing and commissioning process, whether the systems are built according to plan. Those independent certifiers then sign off on those individual systems. If they're not built to plan, then they report that to Metrolinx, and Metrolinx works closely with CTS to rectify those issues.

To your question, MPP Blais: Yes, there are independent certifiers who will review the system and make sure that it is built correctly.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Have you procured that service, and if so, who are they?

Mr. Felix Fung: Yes, Metrolinx has procured those independent certifiers. Again, the testing and commissioning process has started, so they are going through each of the systems—electrical, rail, water pipes and so forth—to verify those. We don't have a list of the certifiers today, but they have been procured.

Mr. Stephen Blais: As I understand the process, once the safety and certification process has been completed, there will be a second process of, effectively, revenue service testing once TTC drivers are hired. Is that correct?

Mr. Felix Fung: That is correct. We have a revenue service testing period of about 30 months, when we run basically empty trains along the corridor and pretend that they are already in regular service.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Have the criteria for that part of this testing been established yet?

Mr. Felix Fung: That work is currently under way with the TTC. Because the TTC is the operator we want to ensure that the TTC also understands what those criteria are and helps us set up those criteria. We are working very closely with them to establish things like the service level—what are the requirements in terms of stops and so forth? Those criteria are currently under development and confirmation with the TTC.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Service level—you're talking about the frequency of trains and the size of the train?

Mr. Felix Fung: Correct.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Do you envision that that revenue service testing would include a substantial stint through the winter?

Mr. Felix Fung: I think at this point that is still to be confirmed, but I will say that these vehicles have been going through testing for the last number of months. As soon as they are delivered to Metrolinx, they go through the testing, including the winter testing that you mentioned.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that. But you would, I think, agree that running an empty train on tracks in the wintertime is different than running a train that's got 300, 400, 500 people, whatever the capacity of the vehicle is supposed to be—

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: If I can say—I know why you're asking the question, and making sure that we have tested the trains during our winter months is definitely part of the plan. It is one of the lessons that we learned from the Ottawa LRT, which was tested on tracks in August and then opened in September.

Mr. Stephen Blais: If that's the case, then it's safe to assume revenue service won't begin this year.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move to the government side for their 20 minutes. We're going to start with MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Welcome to the minister and the deputy minister, as well as the entire team from MTO. I just want to start off by thanking you guys for the great work you all do behind the scenes to keep our roads

safe, to keep our transportation networks up and running. We know you are working hard for the province of Ontario. Thank you all for joining us here today for estimates.

An issue that is closer to me, prior to my being elected and brought in as the MPP for Brampton East, is some of the work that the ministry was doing on Highway 413. I just wanted to ask a few questions in terms of why Highway 413 was a such a signature piece of this government's plan to build Ontario. What kind of steps are we taking to advance the progress of Highway 413? As the minister spoke about in her initial brief, there is almost \$11 billion lost every year when it comes to gridlock. We can especially testify to the fact that Peel region has become one of the transport hubs for Ontario. What are we doing to advance Highway 413, and why is it such a big priority for our government?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you for the question, and thank you for the work that you do as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation. You're doing great work, especially on our new marine policy.

The 413 was an election promise that we made back in 2018 to restart the environmental assessment process for the 413, which had been stalled, or ended, by the previous Liberal government. It was a big priority for our candidates in the GTA because they were experiencing a lot of the impacts of congestion on their qualities of life. They were seeing the impact on business. It was just making it harder to get around in their area. So our candidates in 2018 and the Premier himself were big supporters of Highway 413.

1450

Highway 413 was developed by the Ministry of Transportation and presented back in 2007, I think, as part of the ministry's plans. The ministry had been looking at ways to address congestion in the Niagara region and elsewhere in Ontario and had come up with a new way of determining whether new infrastructure was needed. It was the ministry, through its traffic modelling, that identified the need for a new highway in Halton, York and Peel, and had identified a new piece of infrastructure that we really needed in order to manage existing roads but also support planned future growth.

I think it's always better when someone other than a politician explains the need for new infrastructure, so I will ask Jennifer, whose department is responsible for that.

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: I'm Jennifer Graham Harkness. I'm the assistant deputy minister for transportation infrastructure management, as well as the chief engineer.

Minister, as you said, we adopted a new approach when we were looking at the need for what I would call additional transportation capacity within the GTA and surrounding areas, including Niagara. We examined what the needs were. We took a building block approach. We looked at how we can address the growing demands in terms of our population, where we expected employment, and where we expected people to be living. We looked at, how can we address that, and can we address it with our

existing highway infrastructure and existing transit—what could we do in terms of adding transit, again, into the network, and could we address it through that? Then we looked at, once all of those things had been considered—and transportation demand management, looking at all of these aspects. We looked at it almost as a last resort. Can we look at having—do we need a new highway? It was at that point that we determined that with all of the improvements that we identified—and those improvements are needed and have been identified and built upon—we still needed to have a new corridor, and Highway 413 was the outcome of that.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: That was identified back in 2007. The need was identified then as a great one, and it has only grown since then. As we're welcoming more and more people—as I said, 200,000 new people a year in Ontario, and so much of that growth is coming right here to the GTA, and many are settling in your municipality. We need to make sure that we have the infrastructure. We looked at other ways to deliver it and concluded that a new highway was the only way to do it. We've gotten a great amount of support for it, because especially from a business perspective, it's essential. So we are moving ahead, and the EA is ongoing. We have a robust environmental assessment process here in Ontario. The federal government has identified some questions that they want answers to, and Jennifer's team is working closely with the federal Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to answer those questions. But we will move forward with it when that EA process is complete.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'm so happy, Minister, to hear that the ministry is recognizing the immense population growth that has happened since 2007 throughout the greater Toronto and Golden Horseshoe area—when it comes to providing reliable transportation networks to all of our residents.

I also wanted to ask you a question on the economics of this highway. What kind of economic benefit is this going to deliver to York region, Halton region, Peel region, the general greater Toronto and Golden Horseshoe area? How is this going to relieve congestion? How much time will people save, on average? What will be the net benefit of this highway?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, it will provide relief to a lot of the businesses that are present here in the greater Golden Horseshoe in terms of helping them get their goods to market faster. The 401 is the most congested highway in North America. You see pictures of congested highways in California and other parts of the United States, and then when you find out that our own 401 is the most congested anywhere—we know it, but to hear it validated in that way, it's not something to be proud of. That's because no government before us had the courage to build a new stand-alone highway, as we're doing. So the economic benefits will certainly be great.

In terms of time savings, the Ministry of Transportation has done a lot of work on how much time drivers will save if they are driving the entire route versus other options—and the number is 35 minutes.

The previous government put together a group that came up with a new way of studying and doing traffic modelling and came up with—what was their number?—30 seconds. I'm going to turn it to Jennifer so she can explain to the committee how disingenuous that work was. They did traffic modelling in a way the MTO has never done before and never will do again and came up with a different number that we don't use because it cannot be validated. It's totally false.

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: I can speak to that number a bit.

In terms of the 30 seconds, how that was calculated is that they looked at the entire network and road system, highway system, and looked at what a savings would be with adding the new highway in. It not only looked at trips that would use a potential new corridor, but it looked at all of the trips. So a trip that might be travelling in the southern part of Oshawa or in the Niagara area would be counted in with that analysis to determine the 30 seconds—and of course it dilutes the value of what that new corridor would do in the specific area that it's serving. It's not serving Niagara. It's serving the northern part of the GTA.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: By using a larger denominator, they got a much smaller number, and the actual impact that it will have on people's commutes was diluted.

Thirty-five minutes each way is a significant amount of time savings for people who are trying to get home or people who have companies who are trying to get their goods to market. So the economic impacts will be great.

MTO has done a tremendous amount of work over whether this infrastructure is truly needed, and I can tell you that we are confident that once we get it built, it will have a great impact in a positive way for people throughout the GTA.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Even the way that you've modelled it now resonates with the members in the regions of Peel, York and Halton, because when we take a look at general driving times for the people who live in those regions, you'll notice significant delays in travel time when taking local roads to make it, let's say, from Georgetown all the way to Vaughan, where they could have had the access through Highway 413. Those time savings are very understandable by the people of Peel, York region and Halton, and they're very appreciative of the work that you're doing.

I understand the government is investing billions of dollars when it comes to not only highway transportation networks that involve Highway 413, but Highway 401, our transit lines, the Ontario Line; when it comes to the city of Scarborough, the subway service. With all these billions of dollars of investments taking place—I'm just going to hand the conversation over to my colleague MPP Billy Pang, who is going to talk a little bit about public transportation.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Minister, for your presentation.

I have a number of friends who are either residents of Scarborough or who work in Scarborough. When I came to Canada, I was told that they were looking forward to having a Scarborough subway extension. But what they told me was—consultation after consultation, assessment after assessment, and no subway extension for decades. In my home city, Hong Kong, we have a very strong subway system. So I can fully understand how important it is for the residents in the area if they were supported by a subway system which can help their quality of life—going home, going to work, going to school way faster, more efficient.

Under the previous government, the people of Scarborough were left behind. However, under the leadership of you and Premier Ford, Scarborough residents are confident that they will finally have a subway.

Minister, can you please explain the progress that has been made on the Scarborough subway extension?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, as you pointed out in your questions, building transit is not easy. There hasn't been much transit expansion in the city of Toronto, and certainly not enough to meet its needs as it continues to grow in Ontario and in Canada.

When our Premier put forward his subway plan for the greater Toronto area, which included the three-stop subway extension, he wanted to make sure that this plan was successful because we couldn't afford for it not to be. That's why it was so important that we had the support of the city of Toronto, Toronto city council and York region before we moved ahead with our plans.

1500

Building transit can be disruptive, but it really will affect people's daily lives once it is built. We want to make sure that it's reflective of the needs of the community. That's why we brought our plan forward to Toronto city council. I was so pleased when Toronto city council endorsed the plan in November 2019, I think it was, with a vote of 22 to 3 in favour of our plan, reflecting that it was supportive of the Ontario Line, the Yonge North subway extension, the Eglinton Crosstown West extension and the three-stop Scarborough subway extension.

People in Scarborough have been asking for the same level of transit as other parts of Toronto. That's why having a subway for Scarborough is so critical and so important to our Premier. He had been advocating for it at Toronto city council, as you heard him mention today in the House, so it's a big part of our plan.

We have begun the tunnelling work. I think you've had the chance to visit the site where the tunneling work began. We are almost halfway done, I believe, on Scarborough. We've made tremendous progress on that work. As we complete that, then we'll be able to move forward with the other elements of it.

Thanks to the Building Transit Faster Act, which was a key piece of legislation—if I can just tell you how that one came to be: As we were moving forward with our subway plan, we were also doing a tremendous amount of market sounding with transportation stakeholders and infrastructure stakeholders, to understand what the roadblocks

have been in Ontario and, specifically, in the city of Toronto that have impeded the building of transit or other kinds of construction that would be relevant. We brought forward this legislation—and I did it with MPP Scott. We worked closely on that piece of legislation to make sure that we were identifying those impediments, getting rid of them and moving them out of the way so that when we brought our plan forward, once it was approved, we could move quickly with it and make sure we get shovels in the ground as quickly as possible.

That's why we've been able to make so much progress on the Scarborough tunnelling, on the Eglinton Crosstown West tunnelling; we're over halfway done there. That's something residents have been waiting for. They've been waiting to see this kind of progress. So we're pleased that in conjunction with our legislation, we've been able to bring forward a plan that's showing real results.

Mr. Billy Pang: It's a great answer.

There are some other transit questions from my colleague.

Mr. Mike Harris: How much time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Five minutes, MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Minister, I think you probably know what I'm going to ask about. Two-way, all-day GO to Kitchener obviously has been something that we, from a government perspective, have really championed—especially myself and my colleagues in Waterloo region—over the last five years. It's coming along. It's certainly good to say that we've made more progress than any other government has. There have been lots of promises made over the years, but it's nice to see that we're finally getting trains on the tracks and really fulfilling that commitment.

I was wondering if you'd be able to give us a little bit of an update as to where things are headed. Obviously, it's really great to see a rekindled relationship with CN; I know you probably can't talk about that too much. But if there are some pieces that you can touch on there, as well, I'd be very interested to hear what the plan is moving forward.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I did know what you were going to ask, and I'm going to ask Felix to comment, so that you can get some very technical answers to that.

What I will say is, early on in our first mandate, the Connect the Corridor group from Kitchener-Waterloo was a key stakeholder in helping highlight exactly what the expectations were from the municipalities and the communities along the route with respect to GO rail. They were great advocates for it throughout. So, yes, we are moving forward with it.

We are in negotiations with CN, so we can't comment on that, but they are going well.

We awarded a contract in May last year so that Metrolinx could begin work on the Guelph Central GO station. That will involve the construction of a second platform, a new storage track for maintenance vehicles, and also a passing track, which is very important in the community of Breslau, which we've talked about, so that trains can move in opposite directions and pass each other. As we

put more and more traffic on the corridor, we have to make sure that we have the infrastructure in place so that we don't slow down our trains or CN's trains.

I'll ask Felix if he's got any more details to provide on our Kitchener GO.

Mr. Felix Fung: The only thing I would add, MPP Harris, is that you may recall in July 2021 that we completed the 401 and 409 tunnel, which is a rail tunnel project underneath those two busy highways. With the new tunnels, we're able to get an additional track, and one of those three tracks will then be used to help us run our GO train services at a higher speed. This is another example of how we're moving forward with infrastructure improvements along the corridor.

As the minister mentioned, we are looking at continuing to improve infrastructure, particularly in the Georgetown to Kitchener section of the Kitchener GO corridor. The minister mentioned works at Guelph. We're also looking at various passing tracks.

Mr. Mike Harris: That's great. I'm really happy to hear that.

Certainly, when we looked at what service was like four to five years ago, it was well over two hours from downtown Kitchener to Union—I think we're now down around an hour and 45 minutes. So we've been able to shave about 20 minutes off the journey, which some people may say is not that much, but, realistically, it is. It's really good to be able to see that. I know that was one of the biggest bones of contention with people maybe not riding the train as much, but it's good to see post-pandemic—at least from what I have seen—ridership numbers starting to come back up as we've been able to increase trains on the line.

Thank you for all the work you've been doing. It means a lot to our residents in Waterloo region, and we hope you are able to keep it up.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I know you've been advocating for more weekend service. As our negotiations continue, we'll keep that in mind. Weekend ridership on our GO network has surpassed ridership levels pre-COVID. So people are not afraid of using transit, but the ridership patterns obviously have changed significantly during the week from Monday to Friday as people's return-to-work policies have affected their need to commute. Thank you for bringing that forward. We are keeping it top of mind as we continue our work on Kitchener GO.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Fifty seconds left, if there's anything?

Mr. Mike Harris: That's it from me. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now go over to the official opposition for 20 minutes. MPP French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate your being here. I wanted to also take the opportunity to thank your staff. I know that there's a lot going on in the province, and I have appreciated responses from them.

I have a question about Highway 17 from Arnprior to Renfrew. Minister, at the beginning of your comments you

took us back in time to 1917, so the ministry has been doing this work a long time. And yet this simple highway project—you've decided to procure it as a public-private partnership instead of using the normal public procurement. I would say the Ministry of Transportation knows what it's doing when it comes to roads—or should. According to the most recent Infrastructure Ontario market update, the Highway 17 P3 contract won't be finalized until 2026. At least seven years will have gone by since the government's funding announcement before the work finally gets under way—again, over a century of experience building roads in Ontario.

So my question is, why does your ministry need to procure this highway project as a P3, which will cost more and obviously takes much longer?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you for the question. Before I turn it over to Jennifer for a more technical answer, what I will say is, stage 1 of the work was completed. Building a new interchange is a key element that has to happen before you widen the road, to make sure that the bridge and infrastructure around it are suitable.

MTO does a lot of work on trying to determine the best way to move forward with procuring a project, making sure that we're delivering value for taxpayers and that we are sequencing our work in the right way. While that work is ongoing—Jennifer's team is doing that—we're just mindful of making sure that we're moving forward with the right delivery model. So that assessment is ongoing.

1510

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: With respect to Highway 17, a lot of the work that we're doing right now is related to the design and engineering that is required for the development of the project. The Calabogie Road interchange is under construction, and the rest of the work is advancing through the design and engineering phase. There's a lot to that work. It not only involves doing the technical aspects of design, but it also involves speaking with municipalities, members of the community and, very importantly, Indigenous consultation. So as we develop the project, there is considerable effort that goes into that.

And then, of course, you had asked about the procurement.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, why P3 instead of what you guys have been doing for a century?

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: Again, there are a number of delivery models that we look at when we're evaluating a project and how we get that done. We do analysis. We work with Infrastructure Ontario in terms of assessing various delivery models and determining what is the best fit for the project. And it's a project focus. So that's the analysis that we do for all of our projects when we're going through and looking at how we procure. MTO is involved in the development of the project. MTO is involved in, obviously, the advanced engineering and the contract and the administration of the work.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: If we're looking at the chart on page 49 of the estimates briefing book, the government appears to be defunding the transportation electrification program. My understanding is that it was supposed to

improve access to EV charging infrastructure, particularly in rural and northern Ontario. According to interim actuals shown in the briefing book, the government failed to spend any of the program's \$32-million budget last year. Has that program been scrapped? Can you give us an update? What's going on?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Can you—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, it's page 57 of the PDF, but it's page 49 of the MTO estimates briefing book. Basically, it looks like the transportation electrification program is being defunded—so if you could enlighten us. I may be misinterpreting.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: We are moving ahead with our EV charging program. We've done a lot of work in terms of the policy and how to roll that out, what the best way to do it is. It's obviously kind of a greenfield area for the ministry, so we want to make sure we get it right. There is a lot of consultation that has been going into that.

I'll ask Jonathan to speak to the accounting of it.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: I'm Jonathan Lebi, the assistant deputy minister of integrated policy and planning division.

It is being fully funded. We're planning and committing \$91 million over three years, with an expected launch in the fall, both, as you mentioned, looking at rural areas, areas of need where there are gaps in the charging infrastructure, and government sites where there might be a benefit—Ontario parks and the like. So the province is moving full steam ahead. We wanted to get it right. We wanted to understand where the technology need is and, as the minister had said before, use data to drive where there are gaps in terms of the charging infrastructure so that there isn't fear and concern, for those who are adopting EVs, that they won't be able to actually access those services, as needed, on the highway system. So we're finalizing our work. We expect, in the next few months, that those details will come out for a fall launch.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Looking at the chart on page 49, then—have I misinterpreted?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As Jonathan said, we are moving ahead with it.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm not sure, Jonathan, if it's because maybe the policy work is taking us a little bit longer. Is that what—

Interjections.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Okay. I'm not sure if we've got the right page here.

We are moving ahead with a provincial plan that we announced in our budget. In this past budget, we announced a plan for \$91 million over three years to bring forward an electric vehicle charging network. As Jonathan said, we're working with municipalities and also looking at provincial assets to figure out how we can best deliver that infrastructure to people in the best way. As I said, it's all new, so we're doing a lot of policy work over what's the right technology, what are the right places, what are the right distances—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, I am looking forward to having lots of conversations about the driving infrastructure.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm sure we'll get a lot of feedback on it when we roll it out. But I can tell you we're doing a lot of policy work and consultation on it within the ministry now.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I can also connect with Felix or someone to see if we're looking at the same things.

I am going to move on, unless Felix can tell me what I'm—

Mr. Felix Fung: I was just going to note that there was also an accounting treatment on that dollar, MPP French. While there was a \$32-million decrease in operating, there was a \$12-million increase in capital, so it was the way that we accounted for that money. That was the mathematical explanation.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate that. Thank you.

The interim report of the Northern Transportation Task Force is my next direction here. They noted the inconsistent performance of the province's privatized area-maintenance contractors.

I would like the minister and folks to provide us with the non-conformance report summaries for each of the province's area-maintenance contractors, including any assessed penalties for the past year. Is that something I can request or have, pretty please?

Mr. Eric Doidge: I'm Eric Doidge. I'm the assistant deputy minister for the MTO operations division.

We don't have the reports right here available to us, but I think that we can provide the reports and make them available to you.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That would be great. Thank you.

The task force also urged the ministry to "investigate potential discrepancies in winter maintenance outcomes across private contractors, and between private contractors and MTO staff, with the goal of increasing consistency in winter road maintenance across northern Ontario." Has the ministry conducted such an investigation? Is there a report or findings from that investigation, if it has happened? Where are we with that?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'll speak generally, and maybe Eric can speak directly to it.

What I'll say is that we are always reviewing our contracts with our winter maintenance contractors. It's something we're evaluating all the time, after every major storm, if we find out there's any issue, and we look at it across the northern network in terms of trying to identify exactly those discrepancies and figure out how we can address them. It is a continuous file because we're always working on it. We did it before the northern task force was struck. I don't know if Eric's team has formalized that, but we certainly do it all the time, and I get briefed on these issues regularly.

Eric?

Mr. Eric Doidge: Further to the minister's point, after every major storm event, we do an investigation on the performance of our maintenance contractors in order to work towards continuous improvement.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: That's how we ended up with our new Trans-Canada winter maintenance standard—because of all the work we were doing on winter maintenance contracts and the evaluation that we're doing of our contractors. We concluded that our service levels had improved, and so we were able to reduce the number of hours required to get to bare pavement. We're continuing to monitor them to make sure that they meet that new, improved standard.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: So it's as there's an event—it's not like one whole investigation; it is, I'll say, case by case or event by event. It's ongoing?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Every year, an evaluation is done to see if we have met the standard that was set—before, it was 16 hours to bare pavement; now it's 12 hours to bare pavement, and we know when we meet it to 96%, 97%, 98% or 99%. We look at all of our contractors, and then we summarize it. I know that's publicly available, and I say it all the time in the House, so I'm sure we can get you that information.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Further to the work that they had done, the task force also recommended improved training standards for commercial truck drivers, including specialized training for northern conditions. I know that, as critic—and I know that the minister has heard harrowing stories about truck drivers thrown into bad weather conditions without the training by different operators. So I'd like to know, will the ministry be implementing those recommendations—something like that, something better? And can this committee have that commitment about whether the ministry intends to implement those recommendations and others made by the task force, just to wrap up the task force piece?

1520

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The ministry intends to continue to find ways to improve road safety, including improving truck driver training curriculum and standards. We are working with the Truck Training Schools Association of Ontario, with the Ontario Safety League. We're looking at the recommendations that are put forward by the Northern Transportation Task Force, by members of the opposition. We look at it all to make sure that we are bringing forward the best policy and the best improvements possible. We are always looking at that. I met with them recently. As I said, it's ongoing work.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: On page 55 of the briefing book, so 63 of the PDF, we see that the transportation safety services item is being cut by \$79 million, or 73%. Minister, I know that you mentioned this in your remarks, but I didn't take notes fast enough. Can you please explain why the program is being cut? I think you mentioned that it was being moved to a different division. This is the program that oversees drivers' examination services and initiatives to stop impaired driving, as well as the medical suspension program. So if you can just clarify—

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The ministry undertook a review of all of its policy work and how it was delivering it, and reorganized its divisions over the last couple of

years. That's why some of the names are new. The determination was made from an administration perspective that it was best to move it. That's why there was the change.

It may have predated you, Deputy, but if you want to speak to it—

Mr. Doug Jones: Just in the middle of that page, you can see a few lines that outline the \$79 million; \$61 million is related to the elimination of the validation tag fees that the minister referenced in her opening remarks, and the other \$15 million is related to driver education service. We took it out of transportation safety division and moved it over to another division that is focusing on contract management for the most part. It's just a transfer between areas.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm also going to stay—in the weeds, but in specifics here. On page 83, we see that funding for the Connecting Links Program remains frozen at \$30 million, where it has been for the last five years. Does the ministry think that there is need to increase this funding?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The program has been very successful. We get a lot of applications, and we work closely with municipalities that bring forward those applications. We've made some adjustments to it. Actually, we conducted a review of it back, I think, in 2020. And we've got a new one planned, I think, Eric?

Mr. Eric Doidge: Yes, that's correct.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Yes, we're doing another review. Feedback, such as the kind of question you're raising, would come through that review.

Mr. Eric Doidge: The review that we did back in 2020 resulted in an increase in funding of bridge projects. But what we are planning on rolling out, in its very early days right now, is doing a review of the program as a whole. The program as a whole hasn't been done since 2017. We feel that it's time to take another look at it. As the minister said, it's a very successful program. That \$30 million goes a very long way in connecting our communities. We want to take a look at that program and see what adjustments we might make to it in the future.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: How am I for time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Four minutes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: On page 49, we see that last year's gas tax revenue for municipal transit, the dedicated funding for public transportation, came in at \$37 million less than planned according to the interim actuals.

If there is another shortfall in gas tax revenues this year, will the ministry make up the difference, as it had done with the top-up in the 2022-23 year announced in February?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Obviously, we did top it up last year, and that was very well received by municipalities. It's hard to tell, right now, what we'll do. We'll wait and see what the gas tax revenues are. We kept the ridership at pre-pandemic levels in our gas tax funding allocation. We kept it at early 2019 levels, as requested by municipalities. As we've moved out of the pandemic, we've informed municipalities that we're going to have to look at that formula itself. But we haven't determined how we are going to move forward with it at this time.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to hear that you had said earlier—I'm shifting back to EV while I still have a couple of minutes. You said you're still planning to spend that \$91 million on electric-vehicle-charging infrastructure?

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay, good.

There is no mention of a Rural Connectivity Fund in the briefing book, so has that been cancelled? What is going on where that's concerned? I'm not aware of any program details being announced with the Rural Connectivity Fund or any part of that. It says there has been a realignment—

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As part of the coming announcement on EV chargers, there will be a rural component—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay, good, because there are a lot of gaps. Obviously, the folks in rural and northern Ontario are watching with interest.

Hi, Jonathan. Welcome back.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Thank you so much.

The minister is right. Two-stream is one of the big priorities around rural areas and more remote areas. We tend to have good saturation in the more built-up urban areas through the private sector already, so there will be a big focus on communities in the rural areas, in particular, as the minister said.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: So let's wait for the details?

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: The details, yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: When?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: In the coming months.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Actually, I hope that with that announcement or with the details, folks are looking at not just northern and rural, but parks and things in their communities—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: That will be one of the streams. As I said, looking at provincial assets like provincial parks, where people will actually spend some time—we'll give them the opportunity to charge there, but there will also be a municipal stream that will include rural municipalities. We'll be working with them so that they can determine the best places within their communities to provide that infrastructure.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Now I have probably 30 seconds, so I'm going to jump—I had a conversation with Metrolinx about the Bowmanville GO extension, because there's no money for stations whatsoever on that line, and they're working with partners and hoping that they have the investment to build the stations. Will the province help us out if they can't find that magical investor to build all the stations? Will the province put in a platform and a bridge or whatever would make it safe so folks can get off the train if there's no station money?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Our Transit-Oriented Communities Program and our development program is a big part, but we will make sure that—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Folks can get off the train safely?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: —can get on and off the train.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Good.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's the end of this round.

Over to the independent: MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Minister, in our last session, you ended the session by criticizing the city of Ottawa for doing trial testing on our LRT during August. Of course, you're currently doing testing and commissioning in June, one of the warmest months that we've had in years and years and years.

Are you committing to having revenue-service trial running and testing through the winter months before putting the train into operation?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: We've been testing the system for months now already. As I've said, I think—

Mr. Stephen Blais: It has been bedding-in. Ottawa did bedding-in during the winter.

Are you committing to having full-fleet-revenue-service testing through the winter months before putting the service into operation?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I can commit to making sure that our testing and commissioning process meets the highest level of safety and that we follow the recommendations of Justice Hourigan's report.

Mr. Stephen Blais: How will you ensure that the challenges with the vehicles that are experienced with high customer loads, interactions with salt and snow and everything that happens in real life outside of a sterile testing environment—if you're not doing real-life, in-winter trial running, how can you ensure that issues that were seen in Ottawa don't replicate themselves with only summer-based trial running?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: We will be doing winter testing. We will be doing a fulsome test and, as I said, we'll be drawing upon the lessons of the Ottawa LRT. I've said it over and over again, nobody wants to see another Ottawa LRT. The testing tracks there were placed and didn't reflect the actual network that it would be running on. We've been testing trains on the actual track now for some time and—

Mr. Stephen Blais: What tracks in Ottawa were used for testing that weren't part of revenue service?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: What I mean is that they created a testing facility for their tracks before they put it on the actual rail system. What we've been doing here on the Eglinton Crosstown is, we've been running trains now for some time.

1530

Mr. Stephen Blais: You're talking about the National Research Council, the federal government national agency for testing, is what was used for winter—anyway, maybe—

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Maybe I misspoke, but—go ahead, Felix.

Mr. Felix Fung: Minister, you did not. Maybe I'll just add some clarity, in that in the project agreement that we have with CTS, as part of the testing and commissioning, they must test the trains in what was defined as the "defined environment" for which the train will operate in the future. That includes winter. That includes—

Mr. Stephen Blais: For testing and commissioning?

Mr. Felix Fung: Correct.

Mr. Stephen Blais: But what about the revenue service testing that is needed before—

Mr. Felix Fung: That is part of the testing and commissioning work that we will be doing. We do test that—regular service at the frequency, at the speed. Part of that work is to test in that which we defined as that defined environment.

Mr. Stephen Blais: So if that revenue service testing does not happen this upcoming winter, then is it safe to say that service will not open to the public until 2025?

Mr. Felix Fung: As the minister mentioned, we have test tracks which we could run sections of the train right through to test in different environments. That includes winter conditions as well. I will also note that it's a little bit different for the Crosstown, as you know, as half of the length of the line is also underground. So where we're testing now is—you're right; we will need to test for the outside conditions, and that is part of the testing commission work that we will do, to test in the winter conditions.

Mr. Stephen Blais: How do you test full passenger volumes on a test track?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Can I just say, I think I understand your concerns. We take, as I said, the safety of any line that we're opening very seriously. The line of questioning is very technical in terms of what Metrolinx will be looking for—and I'm not saying that they're not important. I'm just saying, in terms of our ability to answer with such specificity to your question—what I'd like to do is to take this back to Metrolinx, and if we can, follow up directly with your office and see if we can provide more specific answers to your questions.

As I said, safety is the number one priority. We're incorporating the recommendations from Justice Hourigan's report. They include making sure that we're testing under the right conditions and that, before we get to an opening, that we have made sure that we have tested the trains and all the systems in all the conditions.

If the Chair will let me—I'd be happy to follow up with Metrolinx with some more technical responses to these questions, because I think we might not be providing the level of detail that the MPP is looking for.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I would appreciate that because, to date, the only information my office has been able to get out of Metrolinx is equivalent to what you would get at a public meeting. In fairness, I think, given that there are at least several billion dollars on the line still yet to be paid, we deserve some more clarity.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm sure we can get to the parameters of what the testing and commissioning schedule would look like. But as I've said many times, we're still working out the details of the schedule with the consortium itself. We will certainly get, I think, the themes around what is being tested and during what—maybe talk about the phases of testing and commissioning.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that.

I want to go to Highway 417. MPP French brought up the widening that's taking place from Arnprior to Renfrew. I have lots of family in Arnprior. I grew up, basically, on Calabogie Lake, which is Greater Madawaska, so I appreciate how dangerous that highway was.

That being said, residents of Hawkesbury and Rockland and Orléans have dealt with what is, I think, broadly considered an inadequate regional highway for decades. They access that highway at grade with traffic signals at volumes that I would suggest far exceed what you're seeing travelling from small communities like Arnprior, Madawaska and Renfrew on the 417. So I'm wondering what the government's view is on Highway 174/17 in the east end of Ottawa and eastern Ontario and the potential to either make significant investments in that or upload that from the two cities.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, as I indicated in my previous answer, the project—I'm not sure if I've got the exact geography, but we've moved forward with stage 1, we're working on the interchange at Calabogie, and we're doing the design work and consultation on stage 2. We've announced that we are moving ahead with the project, but we're still in the design and consultation—

Mr. Stephen Blais: I don't mean to cut you off, but we're talking about two different parts of the highway.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: That's why I'll ask Jennifer to come.

Mr. Stephen Blais: What you're talking about is in the west end, west of Ottawa, heading towards what Ottawa would consider cottage country. I don't disagree that it's dangerous. And I agree that it's important to do.

What I'm talking about is the city of Hawkesbury, the city of Rockland and the community of Orléans, which is in the east side of the city of Ottawa. They currently have Highway 174 and Highway 17; it's one highway with two names. They enter and exit the highway at grade, at traffic lights, for most of that highway length. The volumes on that highway are considerably higher than in the west end of the city towards the cottage area of Ottawa.

So I'm wondering what your view is on either making significant investments for the city of Ottawa and the region of Prescott and Russell to make improvements to that one highway that has two names, or to take the highway back and make it a proper cross-jurisdictional provincial highway.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: What I will say is, we've put forward a series of regional transportation plans. We put forward our Eastern Ontario Transportation Plan. We will be putting together a task force that will include local mayors and transportation stakeholders who will work with the Ministry of Transportation as we develop—we call them action items, but essentially they're recommendations for the ministry to consider, so that questions like yours in terms of identifying priorities for municipalities are reflected in the planning that we do at MTO, so that MTO is not deciding on its own what we should build and where, but we're doing that in collaboration with people who know the area best.

This section of highway, with respect to moving forward with it in a certain way, as you're recommending, is something that we certainly can consider as part of the transportation planning work that we're doing overall.

Mr. Stephen Blais: If it's not included, though, in the Eastern Ontario Transportation Plan, does that prohibit its capacity to be undertaken?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: No, but municipalities and local representatives bring forward plans all the time, some that may or may not be reflected. The "2+1" model, for instance, had not originally been included in our northern transportation plan, but local councillors and stakeholders had brought it forward, and then it was included.

The idea with the transportation plans is that the transportation planning should evolve; it's a living document. If MTO, in its first iteration of the plan, didn't get it right based on what people want, we can have the opportunity to amend it. That said, there are municipalities around—

Mr. Stephen Blais: If I could just cut you off real quick—I have five seconds. Both the city of Ottawa and the united counties of Prescott and Russell have asked the province to take over the highway. Will you do it?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, we can look—

Interruption.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Saved by the bell.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): And there you go. That's the end of that round.

Over to the government side for 20 minutes: MPP Smith, go ahead, please.

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Chair: I initially want to just thank the minister and the team, the deputy minister, for an integrated work of accomplishment.

Everybody at the table seems to talk about their neighbourhood, so I'm going to be no different. I want to talk about core deliverables and priorities and investing in priority projects like the Yonge North subway extension, which is so important to Thornhill. It will enable economic growth and sustainability for the area and my constituents. I know when I was campaigning, Finch subway station stopped—the last stop was in 1974, and that was the last place that we could get on the transit. It takes a bloody long time to get home from my neighbourhood when you talk about going to Finch subway station.

What I'm interested in is, what kind of progress can Ontarians expect to see on these kinds of projects in the upcoming year, and the long-range goal, especially when it involves connecting an aging transportation system and the technologies and the integration to keep goods and services moving?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you for your advocacy on this project. I know how important it is to the residents of Thornhill, and I know that people just north of Finch have been waiting for this extension for some time. That's why I was so pleased to be able to announce the RFQ, and you were there with me. I know it was a big day for York region as well. We were able to announce, at that point, the RFQ for advanced design work that we're going to be doing on this project as we move forward with it. It's going to be about an eight-kilometre-long project, and it's going to have almost 100,000 daily riders. That's a tremendous amount of traffic on that, and that shows how important it is that we actually get it built.

1540

Even before we announced the RFQ, Metrolinx was doing a lot of design in terms of how we get this right from a community perspective, making sure that we manage

disruptions to the community, to make sure that we align it as well with our Transit-Oriented Communities Program.

There is tremendous opportunity on the Yonge North subway line to advance both our transit goals and our housing goals to make sure that we're building livable communities, which is so important. If you can live over your transit station, it reduces your need for a car, it gets more and more people out of cars, and it makes it easier for people to use transit. That's a big part of the program that we're moving forward with.

As I said, we're moving ahead with the site mobilization and upgrades at Finch station, and we're going to have early works. Construction for that is already under way. There are some improvements that are going to be made to the electrical system that powers the rails, and this is actually the first step, really, to the successful delivery of the project. We've been working closely with York region as we've been refining the alignment and as we've been refining the stations along the route. It's going to transform the communities along the route, and it's also going to enable greater transit connections, because as it moves and connects to the GO rail network, it will also connect to Viva and other transit. So it's going to have benefits to the communities beyond those that are right along the rail system.

Ms. Laura Smith: That's positive news.

We have been hearing about the Crosstown. What is your ministry doing differently with the priority projects, like the Ontario Line or the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, so that we don't see the same kinds of delays and problems being experienced?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you for that question, because I think it's core to a lot of the questions or issues that we discuss when it comes to Eglinton Crosstown.

Eglinton Crosstown was a contract that was signed in 2011. It was a fixed-price contract with one consortium that was charged with delivering the entire project. The ministry and Infrastructure Ontario have moved away from a lot that kind of contract.

As we moved forward and proposed our priority transit projects, we've been looking at the new environment that we are in post-pandemic, the appetite that proponents have for taking on different risks, the cost of goods, inflation, the labour supply challenges, as I mentioned before. What we've done is, as we've looked at each one of our priority projects, we've looked at the project itself and what is the best way to deliver it, and we've moved away from these fixed-price contracts to a more progressive one. We've made our contracts smaller so that they're more manageable and more attractive. It makes procurement itself more competitive, which therefore attracts more bidders to it so that we can try to get the best price possible for taxpayers.

The Ontario Line, for instance, has a South Civil contract, a North Civil contract, a rail systems contract, and we have an early works package. Instead of asking one consortium to deliver all of that, we've broken it up into smaller, more manageable packages. That gives more people the opportunity to bid on our projects, and it makes the environment much more competitive overall. The

work is therefore more manageable, and it allows us to have better certainty over a schedule as well.

So that is one of the key lessons that we've learned from the Eglinton Crosstown—that we have to move away from some of those fixed-price contracts. We've been doing that across our priority transit projects.

Ms. Laura Smith: I was listening, and you were talking about what you worry about. You worry about the price of steel. It's hard to figure out what the cost of steel will be a decade from now. So I guess creating a progressive environment where we can—I hate to say piecemeal, but it's a more accurate way of putting things together, correct?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Yes.

Ms. Laura Smith: All right. I'm going to move away from Thornhill. Everybody will be happy to hear about that. I'm getting out of my own neighbourhood.

I was looking at some of the interesting information on fatalities. The most recent data shows that we've ranked first with lower motor vehicle collision fatality rates in North America, which is phenomenal.

I'm interested in hearing more about the regional transportation plans. You also talked about the towing and storage sector and safety. How were those developed, and how do they accurately reflect the needs of Ontario's communities, especially when you're dealing with safety?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As I was discussing earlier, we've put forward, for the first time in MTO's history, the idea of regional transportation plans. Our first one was the southwest, then we did the north, then the east, and now the greater Golden Horseshoe. MTO works closely with stakeholders in each one of those areas, in each one of those regions, to determine what their priorities are from an infrastructure perspective but also from a road safety perspective. The challenge is, first of all, with transportation, road safety is key, so everyone is focused on that. But the road safety challenges in the north are different from the ones in the southwest, different from those in the east and the greater Golden Horseshoe. So we want to make sure that the policy work that we're doing or the planning work that we're doing reflects the needs of the communities as they've identified themselves.

I think it has been—I can only speak for myself, but I wasn't here before we did regional transportation plans. I think it's very helpful to the Ministry of Transportation. It has really informed a lot of their work and allowed them to think about new ideas.

As I said, the "2+1" model was brought forward by a councillor in the north. He was also the head of a group called GEMS. I'm forgetting what the acronym means, but it's something about moving safely. As a result of a personal tragedy, this councillor had gone around the world and looked at jurisdictions that look like ours, so northern jurisdictions, and looked at infrastructure that supported road safety and identified this "2+1" model that had been deployed and implemented in Sweden to good results. So he advocated over and over again to MTO. Actually, I think they presented to me a couple of times. It was through that process that I was able therefore to bring it forward to MTO. This gentleman became a member of the task force. It's that kind of advocacy from people who

are on the ground that really can transform communities in a way that they think is best for them.

I'll turn it over to Jonathan, because he can give some more technical answers on this.

I think the regional transportation plans are becoming fundamental to the work that we're doing. As a result, some of the ideas and policy work and measures that we're bringing forward on road safety in particular are being very well received by people across the province.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: There's not too much to add to that great response. I'd say a few things, just echoing what you said there—and also to be evolving documents and learning documents. Our approach to some of the earlier plans we've adopted for the GGH plan—now that we're working on a broader plan, on an Ontario plan, we've subsumed them and incorporated them. So we're learning and we're evolving.

In addition to safety issues and safety being one of the core principles, we have a few models that we're always investing in and learning from that really provide significant evidence and data into what's driving our choices and recommendations in the plans, as well as the consultation opportunities with municipalities, stakeholders and, of course, Indigenous communities throughout the province.

I just wanted to round out that great response.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you very much. I'm going to be sharing my time with Mr. Sabawy.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Minister, I really would like to thank you for your submission and all the nice projects.

As a person from, formerly, Peel region, Mississauga city now, I would like to thank you for the extension from Milton to Mississauga, the widening of the 401, which actually saves a lot of time for travellers, because that's a bottleneck in the morning, in the rush hour.

I would also like to talk about GO Transit. Mississauga has now become the third-biggest city in Ontario. There are a lot of commuters between Mississauga and Toronto in both directions, 50-50—we have enough traffic coming from Toronto, working in Mississauga now, equivalent to the amount of people who go from Mississauga to Toronto every day. And as a user of the GO train for five years almost every day, I really appreciate the amount of saving in time, especially during the winter with the ice and the snow and driving conditions. It's really a lifesaver. Only 35 minutes from Mississauga and being downtown—that's great.

1550

My question is, what steps is our government taking to improve GO Transit and expand it to other areas?

I would like to add that the Mississauga-Milton line two-way all-day—I would like to throw that in there too because that's very interesting to my people in Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The business case for building out GO Transit and GO rail service so that it's two-way and all-day on core segments of the network is fundamental to what we're trying to accomplish.

Mississauga is one of the fastest-growing municipalities, and Ontario is certainly a big part of that.

I will speak to the investments we're making on GO, but I would like to say with respect to Mississauga, our government has made tremendous transportation investments, as you mentioned: the widening; we're making investments in GO; and, of course, there's the Hazel McCallion Line. The residents of Mississauga, thanks to your advocacy as well as the advocacy of our former Peel caucus—have been significant, and I think they're absolutely appropriate given the growth that the city is experiencing. With the projected growth, we have to make sure that we're making the transit investments on our GO rail line to meet the needs of those residents—but we're doing it across the GO rail network, Bowmanville to Kitchener and to the north of Toronto. We are moving forward with our procurement there.

As I said, we are in negotiations with rail partners, and those negotiations are going well with both CN and CP on different parts of our network. That's key to being able to deliver the service. We are moving very well with those. Those negotiations are going well and, as they progress, we'll be able to put on more and more service so that you get your two-way, all-day GO service that you have been asking for.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Again, I need to emphasize on that, because Milton is one of the biggest-growing cities now—so it's not only Mississauga, but serving Milton as well. Mississauga has the Lakeshore GO train—so two lines. Lakeshore is almost 24 hours, all day, but the Milton line is short—but that will add a lifeline to the city of Milton as well, so I'm just putting that in there.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Sandhu, please.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you so much, Minister, for your presentation and the great work you're doing in the Ministry of Transportation.

The importance of transportation in the next few years, I think, will be to keep people and goods moving. It is very crucial to be able to connect communities together, and we can only connect communities and cities through a robust transit system and good highways. My good friend the member from Brampton East highlighted the importance of having Highway 413 for the people of Brampton. It is not only important to reduce the traffic congestion; it is significantly important, and it will boost the provincial GDP. It will create thousands of jobs. It will attract more businesses and talent in the city.

Minister, can you expand on the importance of building more highways, as our government has allocated \$28 billion to build highways in the next 10 years? Can you please elaborate to the committee on the importance of building highways and good transit systems for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Well, as one of the most attractive destinations for immigrants, Ontario needs to make sure that we have the infrastructure in place to support that growth. It affects people needing to get around, but also from a business perspective, we need to have the infrastructure for companies that are coming here. Our great Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade is attracting more and more businesses to Ontario, and making sure that they have the right transportation network in place is part of the analysis that

they're doing when they're trying to determine whether or not Ontario is an attractive jurisdiction. So making sure that we highlight our commitment to moving ahead with the 413 and the Bradford Bypass and our other expansion plans is key to being able to continue that great work of being able to attract companies.

We talked about savings in terms of commute times, but the construction of these projects alone will generate thousands of jobs, both on the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413. During each year of construction, thousands of new jobs will be created—and it will boost our GDP by over \$300 million, just for the Bradford Bypass, which is a 15-kilometre highway that connects the 404 to the 400.

So there will be tremendous economic benefits to the overall economy from the construction of these projects, from an employment standpoint and from an economic growth perspective. In addition to congestion management, growth management and traffic management, there will be a great economic benefit, as well.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: You're right; Brampton and the GTA are seeing significant population growth, and to support that population growth, we need infrastructure.

I'm glad that our government is investing \$184 billion in infrastructure in the next 10 years. We are building new hospitals, new schools and new highways.

I want to thank you for your announcement the other day on the weekend GO train. That was very well received within my community of Brampton West—also, the upgrades at the Bramalea GO station. Can you please expand on those upgrades and the benefits of the weekend GO train?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As more and more people are using transit—and as I said, on weekends, our ridership has exceeded our pre-pandemic levels—we need to make sure that we have the infrastructure in place to support that. Just from a station perspective, we have to make sure people have parking available and charging at their stations, but also that the stations can welcome these greater numbers of riders.

I do want to say, because you did point out how much we're spending on highways, that we are making necessary investments in our highway infrastructure. But for every dollar we spend on highway rehabilitation or expansion in Ontario, we're spending \$3 on public transit. I think that is very important, and as I talk to people about what we're doing in transportation, I think it highlights that we have a very balanced plan overall. We're focusing on transit in our urban areas as well as in our rural areas, but also making sure we have that highway infrastructure in place to transport people.

With respect to GO, we are looking—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm afraid, Minister, that we're out of time. Thank you very much for appearing here today—and your team. I know you have to go to another spot, so we'll just give you a few minutes so that you can leave the room, and then we'll vote after.

We'll now move to voting.

This concludes the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation. Standing order 69 requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. Are the members ready to vote?

Shall vote 2701, ministry administration, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 2702, transit, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 2703, transportation safety, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 2704, transportation infrastructure management, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 2705, labour and transportation cluster, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 2706, integrated policy and planning, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 2707, operations, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 2708, oversight and agency governance, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Transportation carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Transportation to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Is there any further business? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move that the committee enter closed session for the purpose of organizing committee business.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Smith has moved that the committee go into closed session. The Clerk will circulate the motion. Is there any debate or discussion? Seeing none, as the Clerk continues to hand out the motion, are the members ready to vote, then?

All those in favour of MPP Smith's motion, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. Thank you. The motion to go into closed session is carried.

I'll just give two seconds there for the room to clear.

The committee continued in closed session at 1558.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

Chair / Présidente

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock PC)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente

MPP Laura Mae Lindo (Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre ND)

MPP Jill Andrew (Toronto–St. Paul’s ND)

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal (Brampton East / Brampton-Est PC)

Mr. Joel Harden (Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre ND)

Mr. Kevin Holland (Thunder Bay–Atikokan PC)

MPP Laura Mae Lindo (Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre ND)

Mr. Graham McGregor (Brampton North / Brampton-Nord PC)

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon (Beaches–East York L)

Mr. Billy Pang (Markham–Unionville PC)

Mr. Sheref Sabawy (Mississauga–Erin Mills PC)

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock PC)

Ms. Laura Smith (Thornhill PC)

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam (Scarborough–Rouge Park PC)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. Aris Babikian (Scarborough–Agincourt PC)

Mr. Stephen Blais (Orléans L)

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto (Mississauga–Lakeshore PC)

Ms. Jennifer K. French (Oshawa ND)

Mr. Mike Harris (Kitchener–Conestoga PC)

Mr. Anthony Leardi (Essex PC)

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu (Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest PC)

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. Isaiah Thorning

Staff / Personnel

Mr. Nick Ruderman, research officer,
Research Services

Mr. Michael Vidoni, research officer,
Research Services