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Lundi
27 novembre 2023

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 November 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 novembre 2023

*Report continued from volume A.
The House recessed from 1152 to 1300.*

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning the greenbelt. This matter will be debated tomorrow following private members' public business.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased today to welcome to the House the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario chair, Dr. Lorne Hepworth. Joining him we have the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I congratulate Drew Spoelstra on his most recent election to the role of president.

We also have the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the National Farmers Union, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, the Beef Farmers of Ontario, the Egg Farmers of Ontario, Food and Beverage Ontario, the University of Guelph and Vineland Research and Innovation Centre.

My friend from Chatham-Kent-Leamington has an additional list.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Today it's my pleasure to honour and welcome our friends from the Grain Farmers of Ontario, Flowers Canada (Ontario), Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, Ontario Sheep Farmers, Chicken Farmers of Ontario, Agricultural Adaptation Council, Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission, Turkey Farmers of Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities, the Ontario Agricultural College, the Ontario Aquaculture Association, and Meat and Poultry Ontario.

Thank you to all your friends and all your colleagues for joining us today, an important day.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 146, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 146, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

NEW DEAL FOR TORONTO ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR UN NOUVEL ACCORD POUR TORONTO

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to enact the Recovery Through Growth Act (City of Toronto), 2023 and the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023 / Projet de loi 154, Loi édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la relance portée par la croissance (cité de Toronto) et la Loi de 2023 sur la reconstruction de la Place de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Minister of Finance like to briefly explain his bill.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: For the past 10 weeks, the province has been working closely with the city of Toronto through the new-deal working group, and I'm very pleased that we have reached a new deal that will help achieve long-term financial stability and sustainability for the city.

The proposed legislation would provide the necessary enabling authorities and codify the need for implementation plans to make this deal a reality. The proposed legislation would ensure Ontario and Toronto continue to discuss important priorities.

The proposed legislation also includes measures to ensure the smooth uploading of all planning approvals for Ontario Place to the province, which, once complete, will support the goal of economic growth of the city by attracting millions and millions of visitors year-round.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, is as important as it is timely. Toronto is unique among Canada's cities, both in terms of the challenges it faces and its long-standing and unparalleled contribution to the province's shared success.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF ONTARIO AMENDMENT
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE
AGRICOLE DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Thompson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to amend the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario Act / Projet de loi 155, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Institut de recherche agricole de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To further Ontario's commitment to the agriculture, food processing and development of new technology and innovation, the proposed changes in this act would, if passed, facilitate the pursuit and commercialization of high-impact research and innovation, the management of properties for agriculture and food research, the development of new strategic relationships, all the while ensuring that ARIO can better reflect the current and future needs of our entire value chain.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HOMES YOU CAN AFFORD
IN THE COMMUNITIES YOU LOVE
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À RENDRE
LES LOGEMENTS ABORDABLES
DANS NOS COLLECTIVITÉS

Mr. Schreiner moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to amend the Planning Act with respect to housing policies in official plans and other related amendments / Projet de loi 156, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire à l'égard des politiques en matière de logement figurant dans les plans officiels et autres modifications connexes.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Guelph like to briefly explain his bill.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This proposed bill, Homes You Can Afford in the Communities You Love Act, provides

solutions to the housing crisis by building more homes while protecting farmland in the greenbelt by amending the Planning Act to require official plans to contain policies authorizing, in areas of settlement, the use of up to four residential units in a detached house, semi-detached house or rowhouse, as well as multi-unit residential buildings of up to four storeys and mid-rise housing developments ranging from six to 11 storeys on major streets, including along transit corridors.

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PETITIONS

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to present the following petition as part of hundreds of petitions. These ones include people from Strathroy, Aylmer, London, Ilderton and many other places. The petition reads:

"Keep Classrooms Safe for Students and Staff.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas students and education workers deserve stronger, safer schools in which to learn and work;

"Whereas the pressure placed on our education system has contributed to an increase in reports of violence in our schools;

"Whereas crowded classrooms, a lack of support for staff, and underfunding of mental health supports are all contributing to this crisis;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the responsibility and tools to address this crisis, but has refused to act;

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

"Take immediate action to address violence in our schools;

"Invest in more mental health resources;"

"End violence against education workers and improve workplace violence reporting."

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Brooke to the Clerks.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

MPP Jamie West: This petition is very timely with the vote today. I want to thank Nick Larochelle, president of the USW Local 6500, as well as Jody Leveille and Mickey O'Brien, or OB, from my home local. It's entitled "Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the use of replacement workers undermines workers' collective power, unnecessarily prolongs labour disputes, and removes the essential power that the withdrawal of labour is supposed to give workers to help end a dispute," and that is their "ability to apply economic pressure;

"Whereas the use of scab labour contributes to higher-conflict picket lines, jeopardizes workplace safety, de-

stabilizes normalized labour relations between workers and their employers and removes the employer incentive to negotiate and settle fair contracts; and

“Whereas strong and fair anti-scab legislation will help lead to shorter labour disputes, safer workplaces, and less hostile picket lines;”

“Whereas similar legislation has been introduced in British Columbia and Quebec with no increases to the number of strike or lockout days;

“Whereas Ontario had anti-scab legislation under” the “NDP government, that was unfortunately ripped away from workers by the” Mike “Harris Conservatives;

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

“To prohibit employers from using replacement labour for the duration of any legal strike or lockout;

“To prohibit employers from using both external and internal replacement workers;

“To include significant financial penalties for employers who defy the anti-scab legislation; and

“To support Ontario’s workers and pass anti-scab labour legislation, like” my bill, “the Ontario NDP Bill 90, Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023.”

I support this petition. I wish the Conservatives supported it as well, Speaker. I will affix my signature and provide it to page Emma.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition entitled “Pass the Safe Night Out Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we are experiencing a sexual violence epidemic, with Statistics Canada reporting in 2021 that sexual assault was at its highest level in 25 years and community support organizations” are “reporting more crisis calls than ever;”

“Whereas 65% of women report experiencing unwanted sexual advances while socializing in a bar or restaurant, and incidents of sexual assaults involving drugs and alcohol most often occur immediately after leaving a licensed establishment or event; and

“Whereas there is no legal requirement for the people who hold liquor licences and permits,” who “sell and serve liquor, or provide security at licensed establishments and events to be trained in recognizing and safely intervening in sexual harassment and violence;”

“Whereas servers in licensed establishments also face high risk of sexual violence and harassment from co-workers and patrons;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately pass the Ontario NDP’s Safe Night Out Act to make Ontario’s bars and nightclubs safer for patrons and staff by requiring training in sexual violence and harassment prevention, by strengthening protections for servers from workplace sexual violence, and by requiring every establishment to develop and post a policy on how sexual violence and

harassment will be handled, including” access to “local resources and supports.”

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Martel.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I will proudly be presenting this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford government cancelled rent control on units built after November 2018;

“Whereas the cost to rent a home has never been higher;

“Whereas people are being forced to leave their communities because decent, affordable homes are increasingly out of reach;

“Whereas the rent control for all units act, 2022, will ensure tenants are not gouged on rent each year;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect tenants from predatory rent increases and pass the NDP Rent Control for All Tenants Act today to ensure renters can live in safe and affordable homes.”

I will proudly affix my signature to this petition and return it to the table with page Henry.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m proud to present this petition and want to thank my colleague the member for Sudbury for his efforts. It’s entitled “Pass Anti-Scab Labour Legislation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the use of replacement workers undermines workers’ collective power, unnecessarily prolongs labour disputes, and removes the essential power that the withdrawal of labour is supposed to give workers to help end a dispute, that is, the ability to apply economic pressure;

“Whereas the use of scab labour contributes to higher-conflict picket lines, jeopardizes workplace safety, destabilizes normalized labour relations between workers and their employers and removes the employer incentive to negotiate and settle fair contracts; and

“Whereas strong and fair anti-scab legislation will help lead to shorter labour disputes, safer workplaces, and less hostile picket lines;

“Whereas similar legislation has been introduced in British Columbia and Quebec with no increases to the number of strike or lockout days;

“Whereas Ontario had anti-scab legislation under an NDP government, that was unfortunately ripped away from workers by the Harris Conservatives;

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

“To prohibit employers from using replacement labour for the duration of any legal strike or lockout;

“To prohibit employers from using both external and internal replacement workers;

“To include significant financial penalties for employers who defy the anti-scab legislation; and

“To support Ontario’s workers and pass anti-scab labour legislation, like the Ontario NDP Bill 90, Anti-Scab Labour Act, 2023.”

I am pleased to affix my signature. I support this petition fully and will send it to the table with page Emma.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This petition is entitled “Stop Billing Recipients of OW and ODSP for Ambulance Transportation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas ambulance fees for OW, ODSP and GAINS recipients are waived under the Ontario Works Act, Ontario Disability Support Program Act and Family Benefits Act;

“Whereas these recipients are still initially billed every time they are transported to the hospital and must have the fee waived after they receive care;

“Whereas this mechanism causes anxiety for those who are entitled to have their bill covered and additional work for caseworkers and health care workers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to:

“—immediately eliminate billing recipients of OW, ODSP and GAINS for their essential use of ambulance transportation to the hospital;

“—implement a program, like the easy-to-use Fair Pass Transit Discount Program, where OW, ODSP and GAINS recipients may upload proof of income and make it subject to renewal annually;

“—to not include hidden fees or mechanisms that take from initiatives or programs that are specifically designed for recipients of OW, ODSP and GAINS who have high health care needs.”

I will proudly affix my signature to this petition and then return it to the table with page Angela D.

PUBLIC SAFETY

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Protect 2SLGBTQI+ Communities and Drag Artists.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes and harassment are increasing across Ontario;

“Whereas drag artists have been specifically targeted for intimidation by anti-2SLGBTQI+ extremists;

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“Whereas drag performance is a liberating and empowering art form that allows diverse communities to see themselves represented and celebrated;

“Whereas drag artists, small businesses, and 2SLGBTQI+ communities deserve to feel safe everywhere in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Protecting 2SLGBTQI+ Communities Act so that 2SLGBTQI+ safety zones can deter bigoted harassment and an advisory committee can

be struck to protect 2SLGBTQI+ communities from hate crimes.”

I support this petition, Speaker. I’ll affix my signature and give it to page Martel for the table.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition I have to read today is entitled “Health Care: Not For Sale.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians should get health care based on need—not the size of your wallet;

“Whereas Premier Ford and Health Minister Jones say they’re planning to privatize parts of health care;

“Whereas privatization will bleed nurses, doctors and PSWs out of our public hospitals, making the health care crisis worse;

“Whereas privatization always ends with patients getting a bill;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to privatize Ontario’s health care system, and fix the crisis in health care by:

“—repealing Bill 124 and recruiting, retaining, and respecting doctors, nurses and PSWs with better working conditions;

“—licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses and other health care professionals already in Ontario, who wait years and pay thousands to have their credentials certified;

“—10 employer-paid sick days;

“—making education and training free or low-cost for nurses, doctors, and other health care professionals;

“—incentivizing doctors and nurses to choose to live and work in northern Ontario;

“—funding hospitals to have enough nurses on every shift, on every ward.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Emma to the Clerks.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:”

The title is, “Support Gender-Affirming Health Care.

“Whereas two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse, and intersex communities face significant challenges to accessing health care services that are friendly, competent, and affirming in Ontario;

“Whereas everyone deserves access to health care, and they shouldn’t have to fight for it, shouldn’t have to wait for it, and should never receive less care or support because of who they are;

“Whereas gender-affirming care is life-saving care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the reintroduction of a private member’s bill to create an inclusive and representative committee to advise the Ministry of Health on how to realize accessible and equitable access to and coverage for gender-affirming health care in Ontario.”

I will proudly, proudly affix my signature to this petition and send this back to the table with page Shahan.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled “Support the Gender Affirming Health Care Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse and intersex communities face significant challenges to accessing health care services that are friendly, competent and affirming in Ontario;

“Whereas everyone deserves access to health care, and they shouldn’t have to fight for it, shouldn’t have to wait for it,” they “should never receive less care or support because of who they are;

“Whereas gender-affirming care is life-saving care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam’s private member’s bill—the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act—to improve access to and coverage for gender-affirming health care in Ontario.”

I support this petition, Speaker. I’ll affix my signature and provide it to page Alina for the table.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition I have to read is entitled “Protect 2SLGBTQI+ Communities and Drag Artists.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate crimes and harassment are increasing across Ontario;

“Whereas drag artists have been specifically targeted for intimidation by anti-2SLGBTQI+ extremists;

“Whereas drag performance is a liberating and empowering art form that allows diverse communities to see themselves represented and celebrated;

“Whereas drag artists, small businesses, and 2SLGBTQI+ communities deserve to feel safe everywhere in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Keeping 2SLGBTQI+ Communities Safe Act so that 2SLGBTQI+ safety zones can deter bigoted harassment and an advisory committee can be struck to protect 2SLGBTQI+ communities from hate crimes.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Angela to the Clerks.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE SAFELY ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA CONSTRUCTION SÉCURITAIRE DES INFRASTRUCTURES

Mr. McCarthy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012 / Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur un système d’information sur les infrastructures souterraines en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I return to the minister.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: It is an honour to rise to address the House this afternoon to speak to second reading of the Building Infrastructure Safety Act, 2023. I will be sharing my time today with my colleagues the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure.

The introduction of the Building Infrastructure Safety Act, 2023, is a testament to our commitment to building our province in a safer, more efficient and cost-effective manner. In commencing today’s second reading debate and showcasing to my fellow House members and the people of Ontario this bill—I am doing so by speaking to a bill that reflects our government’s plans for a future marked by progress and prosperity. This legislation is a catalyst for a positive change, one that will ensure that our infrastructure projects serve as pillars of strength for generations to come.

We frequently debate about infrastructure in this House. We do so because of our government’s unwavering commitment to building the vital Ontario infrastructure—the one that serves as a backbone of a thriving society and the foundation upon which economic growth, job creation and community development are built. We do so because these are such important priorities presently and for generations to come.

Our government understands the pivotal role that robust infrastructure plays in connecting communities, fostering innovation and enhancing the overall quality of life for our fellow citizens and residents. We are dedicated to ensuring that these infrastructure projects are not only impactful, but are also executed with the highest regard for safety, efficiency and protection of our existing vital underground infrastructure while keeping costs down.

First and foremost, the safety of our workers, our citizens and our residents is paramount. Ontarians can rest assured that we are steadfast in our commitment to implementing and upholding the highest safety standards. Our workers are the lifeblood of these projects, and their well-being is non-negotiable. We will spare no effort in creating the work environments that prioritize safety for our workers and the communities they serve.

Efficiency is also one of the keys to unlocking the full potential of our infrastructure initiatives. We are acutely aware of the need to streamline processes, eliminate bureaucratic hurdles and foster collaboration among all stakeholders. Our government aims to expedite project timelines, reduce unnecessary delays and deliver results that meet the evolving needs of our residents and citizens in a timely fashion.

Now, to achieve all of these goals and have successful infrastructure projects and policies and as we continue to work closely with municipalities, private sector partners

and community stakeholders, we must lead, and we must do so safely and efficiently.

In fact, today's bill is the result of extensive consultations held by the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and the Ministry of Energy. Our government engaged key industry stakeholders, including energy utilities, municipalities, telecommunication companies, excavators and others, and we will keep on engaging and working with all partners as we strive to build the Ontario of tomorrow together.

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Now, the Ontario of tomorrow needs us to work collaboratively on building better transit and roads, expanding high-speed Internet availability and getting homes built for our growing population. We hear all the time, all over Ontario, of significant challenges to these aims, such as access to skilled labour and rising costs. But one challenge that is not as obvious is navigating and protecting the existing vast network of critical infrastructure—such as water mains, telecommunication cables, gas and oil pipelines and high-voltage electrical cables—as we build new projects. That brings me to the details of the bill before the House this afternoon, the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023.

Speaker, today marks a significant milestone in the pursuit of a safer, more efficient and cost-effective approach to building critical infrastructure in our great province. If passed, this bill will play a valuable role in empowering the government's ability to ensure responsible construction practices and community development. This legislation is a response to the changing landscape of infrastructure development in the province.

The Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023, aims to prohibit underground infrastructure owners and operators from charging fees to locate essential components such as telecommunication lines, water mains and gas pipelines. This prohibition is a crucial step toward protecting the public from damages to critical infrastructure while keeping costs down for a wide range of construction projects, aligning seamlessly with Ontario's broader plan to facilitate the efficient and safe completion of vital infrastructure projects.

Speaker, before getting into further details on the bill, allow me to provide you and my colleagues some context. Underneath our feet are vast, complicated networks of vital infrastructure. Such infrastructure has been built, updated and expanded throughout the history of this province. Every single one of these items is critical. Every single one of these items provides necessary services for our day-to-day lives, and the loss of these critical infrastructure pieces would represent inconvenience at the very least and grave danger at the very worst.

Part of maintaining the reliability of these networks is a requirement to make sure that anyone involved in a construction project should obtain the necessary information to identify where infrastructure is buried before breaking ground. From planting a tree in your yard to large commercial construction, a clear knowledge of the vital infrastructure below the site is a must for public safety and

a must for safeguarding our assets underground and the services they provide to our communities. This is a process that we commonly call "locates." Currently, the law requires all Ontarians to obtain locates before starting to dig on projects of any size.

Requesting locates is, of course, a crucial safety step that helps prevent outages or injury caused by damage to critical infrastructure. This is where one of our administrative authorities—one of 12 within my Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery—this one being Ontario One Call plays an important role, as it is responsible for coordinating requests from excavators for the location of underground infrastructure. They promote safe digging practices and increase the efficiency, timeliness and coordination of digging activities to ensure public safety for all.

With all of these factors in mind, it is easy to see how important it is not only for all residents of the province to secure locates before they dig, but also to have a system that is efficient while, first and foremost, a system that keeps all of those involved safe.

However, if locates were an expensive proposition that had to be repeated multiple times over a large area, we know that additional project costs and slow construction would become a legitimate concern. And so the proposed legislation seeks to enshrine into law a free-of-charge locate system mirroring the long-standing industry practice observed across Canada and the United States of America. This would ensure projects can be built cost-effectively while protecting workers as well as critical underground infrastructure that keeps our great province powered and connected.

By banning locate fees, consistent with long-standing industry practice, we would stem the possibility of a spiralling cycle of costs that would delay the construction of key infrastructure projects and reduce their feasibility.

Our government is building a stronger Ontario by leading one of the most ambitious capital plans in the history of the province, and this proposed legislation will help make it easier to build the housing, the roads and the public transit our growing province needs. At a time in our history when being more connected, having more affordable homes and improving our transportation options are at the forefront of Ontario's key priorities, making sure the process to achieve them is cost-effective and efficient is in everyone's best interest.

Let me expand on that point for a moment, Speaker. As an example, a local hydro company charging a cable Internet provider for locate requests when they are digging nearby to bury new fibre optic lines comes to mind. This is an important investment and a high priority, especially for those living in northern or remote communities. Expanding high-speed Internet is a large-scale project. We are not talking about a few backyard fenceposts, we are talking about cable that could stretch over hundreds of kilometres, potentially resulting in significant costs.

By charging a fee, one entity—the hydro company, in this instance—could recover the costs of the delivery of those locates from the Internet provider, meaning the

Internet provider would then have an outstanding expense. So the natural inclination would be that they, too, would charge fees when they provide locates down the street for the local utility company before their new water mains can go in the ground or be repaired.

In fact, it's not just a natural inclination. It creates a need to recover the costs from excavators, and it does not take much imagination to see how this would all end, where every underground infrastructure owner and operator is charging, and being charged, to identify their infrastructure. Eventually, that hydro company I talked about is also being billed by the utility company that was billed by the Internet provider. Speaker, this is what I mean by a spiralling cycle of costs.

As such, underground infrastructure owners and operators have a responsibility to each other. It just makes common and financial sense to maintain the current standard of requiring underground infrastructure owners and operators to complete locates without charging for the locates. Speaker, this spiralling of costs at some point would reach a level of significant concern.

But possibly the bigger risk is what happens on the ground when crews are in place, ready to work. These are the kinds of concerns we heard from stakeholders when we met with them earlier this spring. It raises the question of whether it is possible that work could begin without locates being done. While I want to think that no crew would take such a risk, I could also see a situation where higher costs could create an incentive for some bad actors to cut corners here or there.

To be crystal clear, then, that is beyond dangerous, and also illegal. Our goal is to create a piece of legislation that empowers our government's efforts to eliminate that possibility. That is why, I submit, it is incumbent upon this House to take steps like this that help put the conditions in place that will make the entire locates processes smooth, efficient and cost-effective.

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I would also like to address some of the additional measures that this bill proposes to touch upon. For most people, getting a locate done is a simple enough process. Many homeowners may have contacted Ontario One Call themselves to request a locate. This could be for projects like planting a tree or drilling holes simply to support a new deck. The process to get a locate is done by simply visiting ontarioonecall.ca, filling in your email address and phone number and following the prompts on the screen to get the work done. After a few days, utility companies, telecommunications and pipeline owners and operators will mark their infrastructure: red for electrical, blue for potable water, yellow for gas and other pipelines and so forth. For a homeowner on a small, discreet project, it usually is quite simple. However, on a larger scale with larger projects and at a system-wide level it does begin to get somewhat more complicated. There is a lot of other work that must take place behind the scenes to get all these locates done in a timely manner.

That is why Ontario One Call—one of the 12 administrative authorities I mentioned under the jurisdiction of

my ministry—has a growing role in helping to make that system work well and in helping to educate the public every step of the way. Ontario One Call is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that operates within a strong accountability and governance framework. It is designated to have certain responsibilities by our government in specific sectors and industries to administer and enforce certain Ontario laws, including those laws regarding consumer protection and public safety.

Some of these administrative authorities help ensure that certain businesses Ontarians get service from are qualified and competent. For example, if you use the services of a real estate agent or live in a condominium unit, you have benefited from the work of an administrative authority, also referred to as a delegated administrative authority. Or if you have ever hired a licensed electrical contractor, have used an elevating device or enjoyed a glass at Ontario's VQA wineries, you have also benefited from the work of an administrative authority within the jurisdiction of my ministry. If you've ever hired a travel agent, purchased a car from a motor vehicle dealer or needed services from a funeral director or cemetery, you have, once again, benefited from a delegated administrative authority under the jurisdiction of my ministry. Ontario One Call, as I indicated, is just one of 12.

These organizations make sure equipment is properly maintained, that consumers are being educated about their rights and also to enforce laws in favour of public safety. Government retains its law-making, regulation and oversight roles while giving the administrative authorities responsibility for the daily operations of how to best carry out their mandates, including such things as licensing, enforcement and other relevant matters. It is our government's responsibility, Speaker, to ensure that they are consistent in the manner in which they work, the powers that they have and the powers that they use.

In this bill, we are proposing changes that will help that particular administrative authority, Ontario One Call, to achieve just that, alongside their administrative authority counterparts. Better aligning their powers and responsibilities with other administrative authorities is a vital part of these proposed changes. The proposed amendments to the act would also allow minister's regulations to specify additional objects for Ontario One Call.

This is similar to the structure of the TSSA—the TSSA being the acronym for another administrative authority, which regulates elevating devices and amusement park rides—that is the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. This proposed legislation would give our government the ability and flexibility to expand One Call's role in the future and to address unexpected issues. It would help support One Call's evolving needs and priorities and give our government additional flexibility.

It would also provide for the non-application of some provisions of the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, as that act relates to member approval of bylaw changes required to implement minister's orders. As it is presently constituted, One Call needs to get approval from members in order to pass bylaw changes to implement minister's

orders. That is because of the provisions of the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010.

Some other changes to the One Call act would include protections for the authority's officials, officers, directors, employees and agents from personal liability. This, I submit, makes common sense. These are common protections, after all, for officials that work in other administrative authorities, and as such, it is reasonable for this to be extended to the Ontario One Call administrative authority. These changes are needed because One Call continues to evolve as an administrative authority.

Speaker, not long ago, One Call largely acted as a call centre, taking requests from excavators and dispatching them to underground infrastructure owners and operators. And it's worth repeating at this point, and no doubt will be mentioned by other speakers in this House, that the original legislation that we proposed to amend, dating back to 2012, was passed by a minority government after it became government legislation, further to the private member's bill by MPP Bob Bailey.

Now, as our government is now asking One Call and other administrative authorities to take on more responsibilities to support the improvement of efficiencies in locate delivery, that requires better systems backed up by better and sustainable resources, and it is incumbent upon us to consider proposing these changes. These investments are needed to meet the needs of industry, but more importantly, to meet the needs of Ontario's rapidly growing population as we work on our government's priorities to build—to build highways, to build infrastructure, to increase broadband, to build homes and new communities and to build subways and new subway stations.

And this is not the first time that our government has made changes to Ontario One Call's mandate. Just last April, we made important changes to the One Call act as part of the Getting Ontario Connected Act—changes that saw numerous improvements that we are following through on today.

The Getting Ontario Connected Act created a dedicated locator model for projects related to broadband Internet expansion projects. This allowed a project owner to get all of their locate services done by one locator, rather than waiting on a different locator for each utility or municipality, and that locator does the work for the duration of the project. That particular initiative also extended the validity period of locates to help drive efficiencies and avoid duplication.

These changes are improving the locate delivery system and making the process of obtaining locates more efficient. And, most importantly, they maintain Ontario's strict safety standards.

As we continue refining our proposed legislation, we will be continuing our ongoing work with our stakeholders and considering the feedback we receive. That is why this bill, if it is passed, would remove an excavator's ability to seek compensation through the Ontario Land Tribunal against One Call members that fail to provide a locate within the legislated five business days time limit.

In part, our government is proposing this amendment because some Ontario One Call members have raised concerns that the land tribunal does not have the ability to exercise discretion in awarding cost compensation. However, it is very important to note that the changes passed by the Getting Ontario Connected Act will still hold underground infrastructure owners and operators accountable for completing locates within the time limits. In particular, the act gave Ontario One Call the authority to issue the administrative monetary penalties against non-compliant members and excavators in the industry. In spring 2024, it is proposed that these powers will come into effect via a minister's regulation and will be an important compliance tool for Ontario One Call.

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Speaker, at the same time, I want to acknowledge that some One Call members may be apprehensive about administrative monetary penalties—or AMPs—and this has been previously discussed with One Call. I want to be clear: Ontario One Call is set to implement this new regulation thoughtfully and while leveraging existing compliance tools to foster gradual improvements in locate performance. The aim of One Call is to ultimately support the enhancement of overall industry performance and ensure timely project completions. Its primary focus is on raising awareness among individuals regarding their responsibilities under the act and collaborating with them to achieve a shared goal of legal compliance. Consequently, Ontario One Call will dedicate significant efforts to educating individuals about their obligations under the act. Penalties will be employed judiciously, to be used only when deemed appropriate through the independent discretion of assessors appointed by Ontario One Call under the act. As part of a continuum of actions available for enforcement, administrative monetary penalties are one of many tools that One Call has at its disposal. Many other administrative authorities also have administrative monetary penalty powers and, when used sparingly and judiciously, those penalties can be helpful when other less drastic measures have not been effective.

At the same time, I would also say that excavators should find the results of the changes from the past year quite encouraging. From January to July 2022, only 45% of locates were completed on time. However, in the period earlier this year from January to July 2023, approximately 70% of locates were completed on time. This obviously demonstrates a significant improvement and, by working with One Call, we can all help move those improvements along even further.

Speaker, this is a balanced and reasonable approach that helps us reach a common goal. Our province is at a critical juncture in its history to support vital infrastructure projects and our government's priority initiatives associated with these projects. With the continuing increase of online services, our need to get better broadband connection to every corner of the province is more important than ever before. We simply cannot afford to have entire communities left behind because those communities do not have a connection to high-speed Internet. Getting more homes

built that Ontarians can afford and giving them better ways to get from there to work and everywhere they need to go—these are today's infrastructure challenges.

This is a key priority for our government, and we are making investments that will help them to become a reality for all of the people of Ontario. But to make that happen, and before shovels can go into the ground, we need to make sure that critical safety steps are taken and followed.

More needs to be done to help contain costs, especially at a time when we are seeing inflation, labour shortages and competition from other jurisdictions. Prohibiting infrastructure owners and operators from charging for locates maintains a long-standing practice, as I have indicated, that locates are provided free of charge. This would help stem a cycle of the potential increasing costs that I referenced earlier that would burden anyone who wants to dig.

At the same time, we must continue to put systems in place that will help the framework for delivery of locates adapt to industry needs. Our proposed changes to enable Ontario One Call to be more consistent with other administrative authorities is an important one that we should not overlook. Making it more adaptable to a rapidly changing landscape can help unearth a greater level of potential from industry as a whole and it is necessary for the more complex role that we are asking One Call to fulfill as part of its mandate. Ontario One Call members play an important role to help keep the process of getting infrastructure built smoother and more efficiently.

Like my ministry's Consumer Protection Act, recently debated at second reading and now before committee, there are parallels to be drawn with this bill, and that is one of shared interests that go beyond partisanship. Like consumers and businesses, excavators and infrastructure owners/operators have shared interests—interests in maintaining safe and reliable networks that get us the services we need when we need them, we should do all that we can to foster that work and get it done in the best possible way.

Now I will be sharing my time specifically with MPPs Sarrazin and Sandhu—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Riding names, please.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: —parliamentary assistants.

I want to conclude then by saying that I want to thank all those who helped to get us to this stage: my chief of staff, my deputy chief of staff, their team and the team under our deputy minister. Over the past many months, ministry officials have worked very, very hard on this piece of legislation to make it a reality. I want to thank the many, many industry leaders and Ontario One Call staff who have come together to discuss ways to make the locate system work better.

I will now hand over my time to the two parliamentary assistants, who will address this bill. I thank you for the time and I look forward to further input from all members of this House as I believe this bill is one that should be considered on a non-partisan basis.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): A reminder to please refer to other members by their riding names.

I recognize the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: It's my pleasure to rise today to address second reading of the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023.

As my colleague the Honourable Todd McCarthy, the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, has indicated, this bill, if passed, would amend the Ontario Underground Notification System Act, 2012, also known as the One Call act. As Minister McCarthy has also explained, the intent of this bill is to protect public safety and keep costs down for construction projects so that vital infrastructure can be built more quickly, including public transit and roads, new homes and high-speed Internet. In particular, the amendments to the act, if passed, would maintain the long-standing industry practice of location services—or locates as we call them—being provided free of charge to anyone who is digging, effectively stemming a cycle of potential escalating costs if underground infrastructure owners and operators were to charge fees for the provision of locates.

Madam Speaker, when this government took office, we made a promise to put people first and make life easier and more affordable for families and businesses while sending a clear message that Ontario is open for business. As this proposed act demonstrates, we have delivered on that promise time and again. Over the past five years, our government has worked to make Ontario the best place to create jobs and build the industries of the future. There's clear proof of our success in the Ministry of Energy, where from day one, we have worked to create a world-class electricity system that is reliable, affordable and clean—one that meets Ontario's growing energy needs while driving innovation and moving our economy forward.

Today, I'm proud to say that Ontario has one of the cleanest electricity systems in the world, with about 90% of our electricity generation coming from clean, non-emitting sources due to a diverse supply mix. That's cleaner than many of our domestic and international competitors, including the United States, the UK, France and Germany. With our clean electricity grid, which I consider our clean energy advantage, along with our actions to reduce electricity costs, lower taxes and cut red tape, we have significantly reduced the cost of doing business, which has made us increasingly attractive to business and industry. As a result, we are seeing companies and investment surging into our province.

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Ontario is quickly becoming a leader in building electric vehicles and batteries, with historic investments from Stellantis in Windsor to Volkswagen in St. Thomas to Umicore in Loyalist township.

We're also seeing major investments in green steelmaking—the term for producing steel without relying on fossil fuels. While the traditional steelmaking process using coal and coke is one of the largest sources of

greenhouse gas emissions in the province, we're working with the steel industry to end coal use and electrify their operations to support the production of green steel in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie, fuelling our growing automotive sector.

And our groundbreaking, cutting-edge work in new nuclear technology, including developing Canada's—and the G7's—first commercial, grid-scale small modular reactor, or SMR is attracting interest from around the world, creating exciting new export opportunities for our province.

This incredible economic growth, alongside increasing electrification and a population forecast to increase by millions of people by the end of this decade, means that for the first time since 2005, Ontario's electricity demand is rising. More people, more investment and more electrification mean a pressing need for more infrastructure—not only new homes and business and manufacturing space but also all the infrastructure needed to support that growth, including public transit, roads, transmission lines and high-speed Internet. With electricity and with natural gas, that means a connection to virtually every building, every residence, every office, every public facility. The infrastructure is integrated into every part of our built environment, even if you can't always see it.

That's why this bill is so important. The proposed changes to the locate delivery system will get key infrastructure projects built more efficiently, while ensuring communities across Ontario benefit from these projects as soon as possible without jeopardizing safety.

Locating underground infrastructure is vital for public safety. From planting a tree in your yard to large commercial construction, to building new roads—any kind of digging can create a risk of damaging underground infrastructure such as high-voltage electrical cables, gas and oil pipelines, telecommunications cables and water mains. As Minister McCarthy has asserted, this vast criss-crossing network of underground infrastructure is critical to every aspect of Ontario's economy, providing necessary services, the loss of which represents inconvenience at the least and grave danger at the worst. That's why a locate is required before any kind of construction begins, whether for a new home, a subway line or high-speed Internet cabling. It's imperative that we protect our workers and the pipelines and wires that keep our province powered and connected.

One way we can ensure that all potential excavators—from home gardeners to major construction companies—make the call or click to Ontario One Call is by making sure that they don't have to pay for the service. There is a long-standing industry practice that locate services are provided free of charge, not only here, but throughout North America. Providing locate services at no cost helps keep costs down for construction projects and removes a potential cost barrier to people complying with the public safety requirement to call or click before they dig. However, the current One Call act does not explicitly authorize or prohibit underground infrastructure owners and operators from charging for locates.

If this bill is not passed and owners of underground infrastructure begin charging for locate services, some stakeholders could be upset at the fee and choose not to call Ontario One Call for locates, resulting in risks to public safety. Amending the act to prohibit this charge would minimize public safety risk and align with the long-standing industry practice in Canada and the United States.

Of course, Ontario's energy utilities—both electricity and natural gas—are key underground infrastructure owners and operators that will be affected by this bill.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a moment here to express my appreciation for all the dedicated people who work in our energy utilities and who play a key role in responding to requests from Ontario One Call for locate services and making sure that construction can proceed safely. These are the workers who literally keep the lights on in our province, and it has been my great honour to meet with many of them as I've travelled around the province as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy. I know they strive to respond to every request for locate services in a professional and timely manner.

In fact, all Ontario energy utilities—gas and electrical—are members of Ontario One Call, along with telecommunication companies and all municipalities that own or operate underground infrastructure in the province. Before an excavator can commence an excavation or dig, they must contact Ontario One Call to request the identification of the location of underground infrastructure in the vicinity of the dig. Ontario One Call then contacts all members that own and operate underground infrastructure that may be affected by the dig. The appropriate One Call members are then required to mark the location of their underground infrastructure and provide a written document containing information about its location or state in writing that none of their underground infrastructure will be affected by the dig.

One Call stakeholders, including energy utilities, have voiced concerns in the recent past about the rising costs of providing locate services and the difficulties in complying with the legislated time frame requirement. As a result, delivery timelines for locating underground infrastructure are sometimes delayed, which can impact excavation projects, resulting in significant delays and cost implications.

That's why I appreciate the fact that the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Ontario One Call conducted consultations with industry stakeholders, including Ontario's energy utilities, on how best to support underground infrastructure owners and operators to provide cost-effective locates, and how to support excavators to efficiently deliver key infrastructure projects.

The amendments that are being proposed today would improve efficiencies in local delivery, respond to stakeholder concerns, and ensure the efficient and sustainable operation of Ontario One Call, while also limiting cost impacts for underground infrastructure owners and operators, including energy utilities.

The proposed changes to the locate delivery system have the potential to get key infrastructure projects built more efficiently, keeping costs down and making it easier

to build the housing, roads and public transit we need for our growing province.

These are exciting times for Ontario. As I mentioned earlier, we're seeing incredible economic growth, and being able to respond to that growth with the infrastructure necessary to support it is absolutely critical.

There's a good reason that manufacturing jobs are returning to Ontario and large industries are reinvesting in the province—whether it's electric vehicles, critical minerals or green steel, I believe our greatest advantage is our clean and reliable electricity supply. Our clean energy advantage is the result of a diverse supply mix of nuclear, hydroelectric, long-term storage, natural gas and renewables. It's what allows us to produce 90% of our electricity from non-emitting sources and makes us one of the cleanest electricity systems in the world. And it's what made it possible for Ontario to completely eliminate coal-fired generation nine years ago, largely due to nuclear power. We were the first North American government to do so, an achievement that still stands as one of the single largest greenhouse gas emissions reduction actions on the continent.

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At the same time, our industrial electricity costs in Ontario are highly competitive with our neighbouring jurisdictions, who are still much more reliant on fossil fuels than we are. Our economic success, combined with a growing population, means electricity demand is rising for the first time in almost two decades and we need to act now to ensure we can power Ontario's future.

For example, the five investments that I mentioned previously—Stellantis, Volkswagen, Umicore, and green steelmaking in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie—alone will increase annual electricity demand by eight terawatt hours a year. That's equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of the Ottawa region. But that's not all. Our government also has a plan to build 1.5 million new homes, as Ontario's population is expected to grow by two million people by the end of this decade. And families and businesses are increasingly making the switch to electric vehicles, leveraging our world-class clean electricity system to reduce emissions—all factors leading to a significant increase in electricity demand. In fact, Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator's—the IESO—analysis shows that electricity demand could more than double by 2050.

Madam Speaker, I encourage everyone here to think about what that means for a moment. It means that all our current electricity supply, including all our nuclear and hydroelectric capacity, would need to double to meet anticipated demand. That represents the biggest build-out of our grid since Sir Adam Beck created our hydroelectric system over a century ago.

Our government is already on track to acquire the electricity resources we need this decade to power economic growth and increasing electrification with major projects and procurements, including a \$342-million expansion of energy efficiency programs and the largest energy storage procurement in Canada's history.

But looking ahead on the path to 2050, more energy infrastructure will be required, from new generation facilities to expanded transmission lines. That's why in July of this year, the Honourable Todd Smith, Minister of Energy, released *Powering Ontario's Growth*—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Riding names, please.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Sorry about that—laying out our government's plan to build the electricity infrastructure to serve a more electrified Ontario and to provide families and industries with the reliable, low-cost and clean power we need to power Ontario's future.

Madam Speaker, *Powering Ontario's Growth* builds on Ontario's international leadership in nuclear power with our groundbreaking work in small modular reactors and our legacy as the birthplace of the Candu reactor, among the safest, most reliable reactors in the world today and a world-leading source of life-saving cancer-fighting medical isotopes.

That's why new nuclear generation is central to our plan for *Powering Ontario's Growth*, including beginning pre-development work with Bruce Power for the first large-scale new nuclear station build in Ontario in more than 30 years. Bruce Power will start community consultations and conduct the environmental assessment for federal approval to determine the feasibility of siting up to 4,800 megawatts of new nuclear generation on its current site. That's enough new generation to power 4.8 million homes.

As part of that project, just last week Minister Smith was at Bruce Power for the launch of its request-for-information process to evaluate new nuclear technologies that could demonstrate value to ratepayers, stimulate the Ontario economy and be constructed within a timeline that meets Ontario's clean electricity demand. Initiating this early planning would ensure that the province has a reliable, low-cost and clean option ready to power the next major international investment, the new homes being built in the province, and industries and sectors across the province as they grow and electrify.

And with the development already under way of Canada's first grid-scale SMR, we're looking to build on that leadership with the planning and licensing of three additional small modular reactors at the Darlington new nuclear site, for a total of four SMRs by the year 2036. Once deployed, these SMRs would produce about 1,200 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 1.2-million homes. A Conference Board of Canada study estimates that construction and operation of the four SMRs would increase Canada's GDP by \$13.7 billion and sustain, on average, approximately 2,000 jobs per year. And building four units provides more opportunities for Ontario companies to make investments to expand their operation to serve the growing SMR market both domestically and abroad. By being North America's leader in SMRs, we have the potential to grow the 65,000-person-strong nuclear sector in Ontario as well as drive economic growth and export opportunities that would allow us to leverage our highly skilled nuclear industry to be a potential sup-

plier of products, services and expertise in the global market.

Madam Speaker, with our planning for critical new nuclear infrastructure, along with other major infrastructure projects planned for the province, which I am sure my colleague PA Sandhu—sorry, the member from—

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Brampton West.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin:—Brampton West will be speaking about it.

The Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023, if passed, will help strengthen the Ontario One Call process and lay the groundwork for all types of construction projects, from backyard fence posts to downtown subways to a new nuclear reactor, to move ahead quickly and cost-effectively while ensuring the safety and well-being of all Ontarians. In addition to legislating that no fee can be charged for locating underground infrastructure, the bill makes other amendments that address significant stakeholder concerns with Ontario's locate delivery system and help to ensure the efficient and sustainable operation of Ontario One Call.

Madam Speaker, I'll now hand the balance of my government time to the member from Brampton West.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the proposed Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023. I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak about this proposed legislation in addition to the remarks provided by my colleagues the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Madam Speaker, our government is building a stronger Ontario by leading the most ambitious capital plan in the province's history. This includes investing more than \$185 billion over the next decade in infrastructure projects to support schools, hospitals, public transit, roads, housing and to connect every community in Ontario to high-speed Internet by the end of 2025. Our government's investments are fundamental to the province's plan for growth and long-term prosperity.

Infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting the quality of life that Ontarians deserve to enjoy. It's what brings us together and connects us to our families, friends, workplaces and activities each and every day. That is why we're using every tool available to ensure our infrastructure projects are built safely and allow communities, businesses and individuals to feel the benefits from these projects. If passed, the changes to the locate delivery system in the proposed legislation would advance our province's initiative of getting key infrastructure projects built more efficiently.

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Speaker, in today's digital world, reliable access to Internet service is crucial for work, education, health care, communication and entertainment. I have heard countless stories from people who have written to me from across the province, frustrated that they're being left off-line and

in the dark for far too long. It is no longer acceptable for Ontarians to lose out on opportunities due to low-quality, unreliable Internet access or no access at all. No one should struggle to earn an income because they lack connectivity. Families should never have to worry about their kids being unable to access online learning supports while at home. Those in the agricultural industry, such as local farmers, should have a fair chance to sell their products online and expand their customer reach, and individuals should be able to connect virtually with their loved ones. These are all common examples we have heard over the years. It is truly unacceptable for the people in our province to not have the Internet access that they deserve.

That is why our government is taking action with a determined timeline. We have made it a top priority to deliver reliable, high-speed Internet access to every community across the province by the end of 2025, and we have a bold plan to get this done. Our plan is supported by a historic investment of nearly \$4 billion, which is the largest single investment in high-speed Internet in any province by any government in Canadian history.

Speaker, since our government launched the broadband action plan in 2019, we have made substantial progress to connect homes and businesses across Ontario. Whether it is through the Improving Connectivity for Ontario Program and our partnership with the federal government under the Universal Broadband Fund, where we are providing high-speed Internet access to underserved and unserved homes and businesses, including First Nations and remote communities across the province, or bringing high-speed Internet access to more than 63,000 homes and businesses across southwestern Ontario through the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology projects, or partnering with the Eastern Ontario Regional Network, also known as EORN, to help improve cellular service in eastern Ontario, or our Accelerated High-Speed Internet Program projects that were selected through a two-stage competitive process to bring access to even more municipalities across the province, we are working hard to improve Internet access in communities across Ontario, making life easier and setting residents and businesses up for success.

As of this month, Madam Speaker, we have finalized agreements totalling more than \$2.4 billion for nearly 200 high-speed Internet and cellular projects that will bring access to more than 500,000 homes and businesses across the province.

Speaker, in order to show the people of Ontario the significant progress we have made in our plan, we launched our interactive high-speed Internet map earlier this year. This map makes it easier for Ontarians to learn more about the projects that are happening right in their own communities and the progress our government continues to make across the province to ensure that no community gets left behind. The map also features detailed information such as the construction status, provincial and federal contribution and who the Internet service provider is for each project. I encourage everybody

to visit ontario.ca/highspeedinternet to learn more about our different projects and the continual progress we're making.

Speaker, investing in and supporting our high-speed Internet projects has always been essential, but now more than ever, our government is doing everything that we can to meet our goal of connecting every community to high-speed Internet by the end of 2025.

Locates are an important step in building the necessary broadband infrastructure that our province needs to support our goal. That is why my ministry has been so pleased to partner with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery to make enhancements to the locate process in recent years.

In 2021, this government passed the Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act, 2021, and the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021, to help speed up construction of high-speed Internet projects. To build upon that legislation, we also passed the Getting Ontario Connected Act, 2022, which further reduces barriers, duplications and delays that would prevent people from getting the access to high-speed Internet they need and deserve.

We have also regularly updated our Building Broadband Faster in Ontario guideline. This guideline provides additional clarity and best practices for Internet service providers, municipalities, local distribution companies and others to deliver high-speed Internet projects faster. Together, all of these changes will help us develop and deliver these projects quickly by streamlining processes and removing barriers that may result in additional costs and delays.

Speaker, we are doing everything we can to bring high-speed Internet access to the remaining unserved and underserved communities across our province. Our government is helping to ensure that everyone will be able to join the online world that so many of us enjoy, and we are making sure the people of Ontario have the tools they need to succeed. By working together, we can build a stronger, more connected and resilient province for everyone today and for generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the members across for their presentation today. My question today will be for the member from Brampton West.

Across this great House, access to broadband is an absolute necessity for doing business in Ontario. I think that's something on which we can all agree. But increasingly, our hard-working agricultural sector and rural Ontario have been left behind by this government.

The member talked about all of these different bills about connecting rural Ontario, and yet we've seen the money promised doesn't always flow. In 2019-20, they spent zero of their budget; in 2020-21, they spent 1.37% of their budget; and in 2022, they actually cut the budget by half and spent 0.6% of that reduced budget.

What guarantees will there be within Bill 153 that the promised money will actually flow and that we will see connections across rural Ontario?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Having access to high-speed Internet is the basic infrastructure that every Ontarian deserves, and this basic infrastructure was always ignored by the official opposition and the Liberals when they were in power. This government takes it very seriously. We understand the importance of connecting every household and every business in the province by 2025, and that is why we're making one of the largest investments by any province in the history of this country to ensure that every business, every household in the province will be connected by 2025.

The member is right: Those in the agriculture industry such as local farmers should have a fair chance to sell their products online and expand their customer reach. We'll ensure that every community in the province of Ontario will have access to high-speed Internet by 2025.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions? The member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and a pleasure to see you in that chair.

I'd like to congratulate the minister and his two parliamentary assistants on the introduction of this bill, something I'm very in favour of, of course. I've got a little bit of a tie with the former member, obviously, from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Paul Miller. He and I worked on this bill together, so I wanted to get that on the record.

Anyways, Minister, I'd like you to explain a little bit more—I don't have a lot of time now—about the dedicated locator and how important that's going to be to infrastructure involvement as we try to build these 1.5 million homes plus all the other infrastructure in this province.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Sarnia-Lambton for his excellent question and for his excellent leadership well over a decade ago with a private member's bill initiative, working with other parties to bring this forward in what became the 2012 Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, which we now propose to amend by this bill.

One aspect of it that's very, very important about the dedicated locator model is that we want to expand the dedicated locator model. This is the model in which the dedicated locator will be able to search for all the potential underground infrastructure on a given project site. The model is currently used in broadband development projects and has been proven to be quite successful. So by expanding the model to other types of projects, we can help cut costs, increase locate efficiency and, thanks to the use of just one skilled, dedicated locator, we can perform all that is required to do it correctly.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the minister. In terms of Ontario One Call, one of the issues we have in northern Ontario in particular is that ability to identify underground locates. If you're planning out several jobs and you have a small construction window before the snow flies again, it could lead to delays—either lead to delays where you have to re-cover the project site and then

start construction after the winter, or where, if you're in a small town and you only have a few main arteries or roads, you stack and you end up blocking access for commuters who are travelling around.

So in this legislation, under Ontario One Call, will it be accelerating that ability to locate things that are underground so that we're able to get shovels in the ground sooner and have people in construction sooner?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: It's an excellent question from the other side. We know how diverse and large Ontario as a province is and how the winter season is much longer in other parts of the province. So that's why, when we talk about streamlining and giving flexibility and an approach that obviously recognizes it's not a one size fits all, the urgency to go ahead with being able to deal with locates, to deal with them efficiently, the ability to avoid duplication when it comes to locates is particularly important in those areas of our great province that have the longer winter season. So this bill will address that, I think quite effectively, and it will give that administrative authority the flexibility to particularly be sensitive to those particular needs in northern Ontario and other parts of the province with different weather conditions than Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Minister, and the two PAs presenting this very important bill. Minister, you said, "We need to build critical infrastructure faster and smarter to support our growing communities. Banning locate fees could stem the possibility of spiralling costs that delay construction projects and increase costs." So can the minister let us know more? If passed, this bill would help streamline the process to ensure projects like improving transit, connecting more people to high-speed Internet and getting homes built move ahead more efficiently.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you to the member for the thoughtful question. The purpose of the bill is, in some ways, anticipatory. There was a concern that some would charge for locates, and that would be contrary to long-standing industry practice throughout Canada and the United States. Sometimes when there is an honour system, it is not necessarily honoured, and so we decided to propose to enshrine it in legislation. We believe that's the right move at the right time, getting ahead of the curve.

But also, while we're doing that, while we're proposing that, we are streamlining the process, avoiding the duplication. One locator expert can deal with all aspects of getting a locate property identified and not have to repeat the process over and over again. That's true everywhere in the province, but it's particularly true in those areas that have shorter seasons for the spring, summer and fall.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'd like to thank the minister for the presentation, and also bringing this bill. I know that in Kiiwetinoong—one of the things I was given when I became an MPP was a legislative phone. It's got 5G. It's got Bell service. But I've got my personal phone. Once I go up north, I've got 2G, so just texts and calls. It's got no 3G. It's got no 4G, no LTE, no 5G.

I'm just wondering, Minister, if there's any way this bill will help to get me out of 2G and be part of Ontario and maybe, perhaps give us 5G?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I think the member for Kiiwetinoong also knows how important northern Ontario's needs are for me, personally, and for this government. I was proud to join him in his riding as we opened the ServiceOntario centre in Pickle Lake. Those are the kinds of initiatives that go above party and provide better service for all Ontarians.

But also, on this note, of course we want to see broadband and all that it can bring made available to northern Ontario communities. This bill, I submit, is one piece of the puzzle that will help us get what he speaks of done faster and more efficiently. There are many pieces to the puzzle. This is one and I believe it makes a substantial contribution to that goal.

I thank the member for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to be able to rise in this House as the critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways for the official opposition—twice in the span of a week and a half, but today on a different bill. The one before us is An Act to amend the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, also known as the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023. I'm glad, of course, to be able to talk about building, about infrastructure and, most importantly, safely.

While this bill before us deals with locates and with Ontario One Call, I'm excited to take the opportunity and really delve into other ideas for building infrastructure safely in this province. But more on that later, Speaker.

What I'll say is that this bill makes incremental updates to the Ontario One Call system, which has already undergone two previous major updates in the past few years. The need to call before you dig or click before you dig to build infrastructure safely is not a new idea for the NDP. In fact, as we have heard, the Ontario NDP co-sponsored a bill back in 2012 with the member from Sarnia–Lambton. The former NDP member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek co-sponsored, I think, then Bill 8—it may have had a few numbers, but it was the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act that established Ontario One Call as a single point of contact for all underground utility location services in Ontario.

Everyone agrees that locates are an important or a key part of building safely. When we think about it from a residential perspective, folks know that if they're going to dig their postholes and they're not really sure what lies beneath, that is the perfect opportunity—actually, that's not the perfect opportunity, not just when you're digging. When you plan to dig, that's the good time to call Ontario One Call and say, "Hey, I have a project and I'm wanting to put shovels in the ground, or a posthole digger, but I'm wanting to get into the earth. Can you make sure that that is safe and okay?" And so Ontario One Call and its members—the infrastructure owners, the folks who have the pipes and the wires and the tubes and the stuff, the underground infrastructure—know what lies beneath.

To use an example of building a deck, you're unlikely to dig and hit a train. However, when we're dealing with larger municipal projects and large watermain projects or bigger projects, we definitely know that we need to do things well because if you hit a gas main, if you shut off the lights in your community, at best you're going to be unpopular and at worst people have been killed or sustained significant injury, which is why we all agree this is not a partisan issue, that safety is first and second and third, frankly.

But, Speaker, from what we have heard from different stakeholders, we are glad to see that the government has been listening to excavators and infrastructure owners and addressing their concerns about efficiencies and backlogs. I will acknowledge that this bill comes from what we understand to have been part of that consultation and based on what they've heard, and we'll get into that, and there's more to be done.

1440

I think the short version of why we are here is that Ontario One Call was basically born from a private member's bill and, since that time, has evolved and has become quite an agency, and there need to be these changes as they're figuring out some of their tripwires, so to speak.

Speaker, I'm hopeful that what's in this bill will get us to where we need to be when it comes to addressing the backlog and addressing the concerns that have been raised. I imagine, based on what some of the recommendations are from folks like the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and other affected and interested parties, that there will still be work to do, and I hope that the government continues to do the consultation with all sides of these stories.

Speaker, because the government has named this bill the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, I will also take today as an opportunity to invite them into a conversation about building infrastructure safely and discuss what we've heard from the building industry, from environmental partners and municipalities about what we need to build infrastructure safely in this province, whether it's an underwater parking garage or a five-storey building in the flight path of airplanes from Pearson—whatever they need to talk about building infrastructure safely.

This bill amends the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act and defines four different types of locate requests to which different rules and timelines are going to apply. There's a dedicated locator request; second is an emergency request; third is a specified request, which has specific criteria but it doesn't meet the first two; and the fourth is a standard request.

It allows Ontario One Call to independently set fees to members in relation to administration of the act. I just want to be clear: There will be no cost to someone picking up the phone and needing a locate. Locates will not have fees. The fees referred to in this act given to Ontario One Call—that's administrative. That's about keeping the lights on, is our understanding.

I appreciate the briefing that we got from the ministry staff who know their stuff and were clear in explaining and alleviating our fears that locates will not cost anything for

someone to call and get them. What a deterrent would that be: "Should I call to be safe? Oh, no, it would cost me money. I'm not going to do that." No one wants that to be the case and so that's not happening. So when I talk about fees in this case, I'm referring to administrative fees.

There are time limits for specified requests that shall be prescribed as opposed to the statutory five days for standard requests. This bill fleshes out four types of locate requests instead of—I believe it had been two. It also broadens the minister's regulation-making powers, enabling the minister, for example, to prescribe obligations for excavators with respect to the submission of locate requests.

I'll be honest: This is a piece that we're watching. I wouldn't say that I have concerns, but I have interest in this section because when we discussed at the briefing what the minister would need to use those regulation-making powers for, there were examples around timelines, that if five days didn't fit or 10 days didn't fit, they could change it, and that sounded as though it made sense.

However, when I talk to my colleagues from up north, from different areas in the province where it's supposed to be five days for a locate but it doesn't take five or 10, it takes a month and a half, does the regulation authority come into play there? How do we ensure that folks in more challenging parts of the province—I'm not saying the north is more challenging just because it's the north, nor are the members, however, what would ensure that their locate requests are handled in a far more timely fashion? So that's my question about that.

The owner of underground infrastructure shall not charge a fee for fulfilling an emergency specified or standard request—that is laid out in this bill. I'll say that because even though the practice has been no one charges for locates, there were threats looming because the act had been silent to this point. In other jurisdictions, there's no charge for locates, so here we have them putting into the bill clearly that fees cannot be charged. As I said, it was missing. Common practice is that nobody was charging them, but we'll get into how we got here.

We don't have concerns with those things because it's fairly clear. As it was laid out in our briefing, there are essentially four buckets of changes in this act, and that is: prohibiting infrastructure owners from charging for locates, better aligning One Call with other agencies—we heard from the government; I think we're all reaching to fill an hour when this is a bill that is fairly straightforward, but they were talking about other administrative authorities. One Call, because it started from a PMB, needs to have some of its legislation fleshed out, so that's why we're here. Also, the third bucket: removing a certain recourse provision in the act that excavators have—it was a provision that hadn't been used, and I understand that the government made that change based on consultation and what they had heard; and the fourth—an enhanced regulation-making authority that the minister will have.

Speaker, I'll read to you from Ontario One Call. They often have the responsibility for educating Ontarians to make sure that folks know to call before they dig or click

before they dig, and that's individuals or homeowners or property owners. I'm going to read from their press release that says, "According to a recent survey, two out of three Ontarians planning to dig this year will inadvertently put themselves, their loved ones and their community at risk by not requesting a locate through Ontario One Call.

"Digging without locates is dangerous and against the law ..."

"Ontario One Call is raising awareness about the need to 'click before you dig' for any size excavation project."

They said, "We are working with all our partners to ensure that everyone in Ontario understands that if they are planning to dig this year, by law, they must request a locate. That way buried infrastructure owners can identify where their vital cables, wires and pipes are situated and provide locates.... Everyone needs to dig safely, and the first step is to contact Ontario One Call and request a locate."

They provided some statistics:

"—There were 4,769 reported damages to buried infrastructure, which is an increase of 8% from the previous year (averaging 19 damages per day);

"—37% of reported damages were due to digging without locates (not requesting and/or digging" without "receiving a locate);

"—61% of damages caused by people digging without locates were on hazardous and dangerous infrastructure.

"These damages cost billions of dollars to repair and put people at risk. Under the law, if you dig without a locate you are subject to potential fines and liable for any damages."

As Ontario One Call explains, "We do not provide the actual locates.... We are the one-stop shop that connects people who want to dig with the owners of infrastructure. There is no cost to request a locate through Ontario One Call and you will reduce your risk.... It's a win-win.

"If you are planting a tree, building a fence, replacing a mailbox, putting in a new garden, or planning to dig for any reason, you must follow these five steps"—and they lay it out. The first step, which I'll share with Ontarians, is: "Visit ontarioonecall.ca to learn more about how to request a locate." You follow the steps, and eventually you are able to dig safely.

Speaker, I'm happy to be part of a public service announcement when it comes to infrastructure and safety, but it isn't always that simple when it comes to municipalities or to companies, to larger projects. It's one thing if I'm putting in a new mailbox or a garden. However, bigger projects—and depending on where they are—obviously are quite involved.

1450

Speaker, let's take us back in time a little bit. The member from Sarnia–Lambton has already spoken a little bit about this, but he and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Paul Miller, had worked on this bill back in the day, and here is a part of an article from 2012:

"At the provincial Legislature at Queen's Park on December 2, the Ontario One Call act, or Bill 8, received all-party support on second reading.... This bill affects all

of us in the landscape industry." Okay—sorry, this is from the Horticultural Trades Association. "It requires that all municipalities, utility firms, locate companies and other companies who have utility infrastructure in the ground be part of the One Call process."

He reminds us: "Presently, before digging commences, some landscape and excavation companies need to make as many as 13 calls to ensure that all underground wires, pipes, cables, gas mains etc., are located. This is a major endeavour by the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance to unite the industry to support efforts to create an efficient, cost-effective and simple system." And there you have it.

He goes on to say, "This legislation will save lives, make workers safe and provide an effective cost-efficient process to provide locates for all who live and work in Ontario."

So that's from 2012, and here we are, flash-forward: It's 2023. It's wrapping up. We're going to see 2024.

So this legislation has had success, but as we're here, it needs to be continually fleshed out until all of the stakeholders who interact with it are able to efficiently conduct their business safely.

We had heard from the Electricity Distributors Association—and, of course, infrastructure owners have a vested interest in these locates. So I'm sure that there is a fair bit involved in a company having to go through all of their information to provide a locate, and we do know it can take the time it takes. It can be quite complicated. There is pressure on them to do it quickly and effectively, but I will say that those infrastructure owners want to do it well, because nobody wants their infrastructure damaged. No one wants someone to rush a job. Everyone benefits from this system when it's working well.

So we heard from the Electricity Distributors Association: "The EDA is supportive of Bill 153," and that this "legislation strikes a balanced approach to improve locate delivery services that enables the construction of key infrastructure projects while maintaining the safety of workers and protecting affordability for electricity rate-payers.

"We're also pleased that Bill 153 adopted our recommendation to remove duplicative resources through the Ontario Land Tribunal.... As we have seen over the past year, parties have been effectively resolving disputes through faster, more efficient and less adversarial processes such as mediation."

Side note: I really encourage the government to continue doing well what it's doing well. So if they're getting feedback that there's a mediation process that is working well, make sure it can continue to do that. We know that the Ontario Land Tribunal is overwhelmed, to say the least, so if we have alternate means of resolving things, let's ensure that can continue.

But this is an interesting bill. I'm trying to think how many times in nine years that I have been able to talk about a bill that addressed a need and all the folks that have been consulting feel that they have been heard. That said, they have also shared that there is some more to do, and we will hope that that continues.

Part of why we're here, though, is because there was that threat of fees looming on the horizon, and as I said, the bill was silent. To this point, no one has charged fees for locates, but this is a piece from the Daily Commercial News back in March, and it's entitled "Proposed Enbridge Locate Fee Would Add Millions to Infrastructure Projects." This reads:

"About two weeks ago we got this notice from Enbridge Gas noting that as of May 1 they were going to start charging for locate delivery," explained Nadia Todorova, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

"It was going to be \$200 per locate and for every relocate request which really took us aback because over the last 11 years since the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System has been in place, there has never been a charge to get a locate.

"So this was going to be an incredibly seismic shift to the way that locate system works in Ontario, coupled with the fact that they gave us about six weeks notice before digging season starts and they start to implement this fee. One of our biggest concerns was the fact that this was going to set a precedent."

"On March 23, Enbridge issued an update stating, 'Enbridge Gas would like to provide notice of our decision to put the implementation of the locate delivery charge on pause. We will use this time to continue our industry consultations and Enbridge Gas will provide additional information once we have confirmed our approach.'"

So Enbridge put it out there in March, and then by March 23 had put it on pause and was going to continue to look into it. A lot of folks wrote a letter to the Premier, and Todorova says here, "If the fee had gone ahead, it would make Ontario the only jurisdiction in North America to charge excavators for standard locate delivery. In terms of economic competitiveness and just getting projects off the ground it would have huge implications."

There was also fear that if Enbridge did go ahead with that—they did not, and now they legally cannot. But there was concern.

"ResCon president Richard Lyall said although it doesn't seem like a lot of money, it will add up.

"It's not just Enbridge.... You can have multiple calls on a project and it adds up. We're at the point now where we're looking at everything in terms of what goes into the cost of housing and whether or not it's justified. If you take this to its logical conclusion you could be talking about a few thousand dollars per unit depending on the circumstances."

That was the alarm. That was the concern, I would imagine, that brought this to an immediate head, because the act had been silent on fees for locates. Now it will no longer be silent. There will be no fees for locates.

When I'm saying fees for locates, I will acknowledge that what we've heard from infrastructure owners is there is a cost to provide the locates for the business themselves, for the infrastructure owner themselves; they have work to do in order to provide a locate. It's not a matter of them magically happening and there's no cost. However, there

cannot be a fee. Leaving it to the infrastructure owners to continue to co-operate with the government and Ontario One Call—yes, because we want to ensure that those locates happen in a timely fashion and that everybody has what they need to build infrastructure safely.

Speaker, I have already mentioned a bit about the backlogs. The backlog for construction and important infrastructure projects—and there are many things right now contributing to backlogs or contributing to challenges for timelines, especially when dealing with procurement and supplies and all of that. However, focusing on locates, this is from an article from the aggregate road-building industry news rocktoroad.com, an article that says:

"Contractors in Ontario are seeing wait times of sometimes more than 30 days for utility locates to be completed. The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario and its stakeholders are asking the province to speed-up response times.

"This is a really important issue for our members in the residential and civil sectors," said Andy Manahan, executive director at the RCCAO. "These contractors work on road systems, water sewer systems and other similar sectors. Work cannot begin on a project until utility locates have been completed and, according to Ontario legislation, a utility locate should be completed within five days. We're waiting weeks or even months for those markings."

"Utility location is the process of identifying and labelling public utility mains that are underground. These mains may include lines for telecommunication, electricity distribution, natural gas, cable television, fibre optics, traffic lights, street lights, storm drains, water mains and wastewater pipes."

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It goes on to say, "Contractors can't start digging until we have locates on the ground ... The five-day limit has not been respected. Over time the delivery of locates has become worse, seeing them delivered later and later every year. The reason it is such a problem is, in our business, we don't work 12 months of the year. As soon as the ground freezes, we stop working. We're limited to an eight- or nine-month long construction season. If contractors have a project start date of July 1, with an expected close date of November 15, three weeks matters a lot. If a project is getting pushed back that much, we're running into the ground freezing which impacts our ability to close our projects."

This group had laid out, at that time, a six-point plan. I won't read that into the record because this is a couple of years old and I can already look at that list and see that some of those things have—not to say in this bill—already been talked about in this Legislature. I would say that that is what we would hope to see when it comes to feedback and actual consultation, which is kind of a novelty because I don't often see that consultation is (a) accessible and (b) adopted.

Again, I feel like I'm spending a lot of time being positive, which is a weird feeling, but as far as the One Call—

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Hey, I have it in me to be positive. It's just really hard opposite this government.

One Call consultation, from this article from the Daily Commercial News: "Consultation Launched on Ontario One Call System, Halting Potential for Locate Charges from Utilities." Again, as I have been saying, this is what they heard out in the community, especially this fear with that \$200 Enbridge threat of a fee. It says, "The Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and the Ministry of Energy will be consulting on potential options that could prohibit fees being charged by members of Ontario One Call for underground infrastructure locates." And look at that: Here we are.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has written a few letters to the former minister, and now to the current Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery. They have said, "With insights from our infrastructure policy council and energy policy council, we are writing to offer solutions to help address the backlog of locate requests, which is an essential requisite for new and existing infrastructure builds and expansions across Ontario.

"As your ministry is aware, a locate request must be submitted to Ontario One Call for any activity that involves breaking ground, including the construction or repair of buried infrastructure, excavations and the installation of buried fibre optic cables. While we recognize Bill 93 and your government's ongoing efforts to modernize Ontario One Call, additional steps must be taken as many contractors and developers continue to face long wait times for a locator to begin the initial assessment that would allow the dig to move ahead. These longer wait times have resulted in significant project delays.

"The backlog of locate requests is especially challenging in northern Ontario, where there is already a limited window of opportunity to complete critical infrastructure projects given the short summer construction season. As such, it jeopardizes the government's ability to deliver on priority projects, including its mandate of province-wide broadband connectivity by 2025."

They go on to say, "The backlog has compounded growing barriers to completing projects on time, including labour shortages, supply chain disruptions and permitting and planning delays. Together, these challenges result in significant financial burdens for businesses, impact project outcomes and hinder a community's ability to attract new investments in the future.

"In short, we urge your ministry to continue working with Ontario One Call to support the modernization of the locate services and excavation industries."

They laid out six points here and it's regarding the dedicated locator model:

"—Further clarify and provide assurances around cost recovery and liabilities that extend beyond Ontario One Call enforcement of the new administrative monetary penalty system.

"—Continue working with the business community ... to raise awareness of recent regulatory changes and explore other tools to help the industry address late locates." They go on to talk about adaptive and innovative

technology and how that can further expedite infrastructure projects.

"—Work with Ontario One Call and industry stakeholders to incentivize and invest in workforce development strategies that attract and retain skilled locators throughout Ontario." We've been hearing that for a long time. I was at committee for broadband years ago, and that was a big part. We talked about dedicated locators. We talked about locators on staff and how to recruit and retain them.

"—Work with industry stakeholders to identify and close gaps in the quality and accuracy of infrastructure location data."

All of those are quick points that they have raised, with long conversations and the folks who work in this field who can provide that kind of expertise.

That's from Rocco Rossi, president and CEO; that was a letter that he had drafted—a few different letters, actually, but I won't read both of them. They do talk about phase 1 of the ministry's proposal and phase 2, and they do say, "While we support the ministry's phase 1 proposal, we continue to recommend the project classification approach outlined in the Ontario Energy Association (OEA) proposal submitted June 30 ... as part of an earlier ... consultation."

It looks to me—where I see "emergency locate request," "standard locate request," "small project," "large project"—that folks have been thinking along the same lines for a while: the four different types of locates.

Anyway, Speaker, everything you want to know about locates you can learn today here in this Legislature, because it is an opportunity to talk about it, but I don't think that it is very contentious. I think that the history of the Ontario One Call agency, the priorities of it, the needs of the excavators and also of the infrastructure owners—that we are, I'll say, fine-tuning, and we are glad to see that consultation has happened—proof of consultation, that's new. Sometimes we hear rumours of consultation but we don't know what was involved, so that's new.

But I would like us to talk a bit about the title and delve into some other conversations. The title of this bill is Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023. I have an interesting article, and I was going to summarize it, but it's just so good, I'm going to read it. It's called, "Ford Government Forced to Fix Rushed Zoning Order That Put Tower on Flight Path." This is from earlier this month in a Global News article. The reason I'm going to share it is, while we're talking about building infrastructure safely, we have to talk about following process, not skipping steps, certainly not rushing a process that needs thoughtful consideration, that needs professional input, that needs people who are actually planners to be involved. Whether it's environmental assessments that we can't sidestep, ministerial zoning orders have been given out like candy in this province recently and, really—for the folks at home—an MZO or ministerial zoning order is like a fast pass. Sometimes they've been requested by municipalities, and sometimes they haven't. Sometimes they've been very contentious and people are really unhappy about

them and others are happy, and sometimes the people who are happy are the developers who are going to make bajillions of dollars and the people who are unhappy are the people who have to live with these decisions. So talking about building infrastructure safely—totally fair game. The article is about a rushed process without factoring in safety:

“The Ford government was forced to scale back a minister’s zoning order after the developer was given permission to build a skyscraper right in the middle of the flight path of Pearson International Airport, sources told Global News, after a rushed process.

“Months after it was issued, the zoning order was quietly amended when airport officials told the government it couldn’t allow a 50-storey tower to be built on a flight path utilized by hundreds of aircraft.

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“The gaffe is likely to draw more scrutiny to the province’s use of minister’s zoning orders or MZO, a controversial tool that allows the province to overrule and replace planning decisions made by local councils.”

So just to recap: A minister’s zoning order gave permission to a developer to build a 50-storey building in the middle of a flight path, which I’m willing to bet could have been prevented—okay, moving on, it says:

“A rushed process

“In May, the province surprised bureaucrats and local politicians at Mississauga city hall when it issued two zoning orders to skip local planning rules on several buildings in the city.

“The announcement blindsided local officials, who were not expecting the MZOs. Between two orders, the ... government doubled the size of a waterfront development to 16,000 units and allowed towers along Hurontario Street.

“The significant changes were announced late on a Friday night by provincial officials, who pushed out the announcement just ahead of the weekend. Local sources in Mississauga told Global News the move was a surprise and bureaucrats found out about the planning changes at the same time as everyone else—when the press release landed”—not the plane, but the press release.

“It wasn’t just local officials, however, who were scrambling.

“Sources with knowledge of the provincial process told Global News the request for one building included in the zoning order—a 50-storey tower—came from the developer and was turned around by the ... government in less than two weeks.

“The order to allow the building near Toronto Pearson airport came through the Premier’s office and was given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the sources said.

“Airport forced to take province aside

“After the zoning order was announced, and city staff left scrambling to put the planning direction into action, officials at Toronto Pearson airport were forced to intervene.

“Staff with the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, the group in charge of Pearson, contacted the province to explain the building was in an area used as an emergency flight path and that its height could impact their operations, sources told Global News.

“The province was effectively told they had allowed a developer to build a skyscraper in the middle of a flight path relied upon by the country’s busiest airport.

“In response to feedback from the Greater Toronto Airports Authority regarding its proximity to Pearson airport, the former minister amended this MZO to remove the northern site located at 5645 Hurontario Street,” a spokesperson for the Ford government confirmed.

“Neither the GTAA nor Transport Canada, the federal body that regulates airports, would comment on the specifics.

“The GTAA continues to have conversations with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing related to municipal issues, as well as zoning issues, affecting the airport,” the airport authority said.

“In August, after being put right by the airport, the ... government quietly amended the MZO it had issued in May. The government did not explain its reasoning for the changes at the time either publicly or to local officials.

“The updated zoning order removed any reference to the address beside the airport, effectively killing any chance of the developer fast-tracking their proposal.”

Speaker, I’m still reading from this article, because why wouldn’t I?

“As the Ford government struggles to move on and recover from the greenbelt scandal, MZOs threaten to be the province’s next headache.

“Since the scandal claimed two ministers and several staffers, the province has reversed its controversial decision to swap land out of the greenbelt and another plan to force some cities to expand their boundaries.” This was written a while ago. We’ve seen that reversed too.

As the NDP leader has said, “From the greenbelt grab to forced urban boundary expansions to MZOs, Ford has a deeply troubling pattern of putting his friends ahead of everyone else.”

Speaker, that article, if folks are looking for that one—November 6, from Global News: “Ford Government Forced to Fix Rushed Zoning Order That Put Tower on Flight Path.” That’s what happens when you don’t do your homework or your due diligence and if you’re not working with planning departments and you’re not listening to folks who know what on earth they’re doing, then, what? We’re going to build a tower in front of a plane.

I’m making light of it only because it didn’t happen—crisis averted—but these things cannot be allowed to happen. And when they do and when there are articles like this and examples like this that we can point to, it does call into question how on earth the government is building infrastructure safely. That’s what the act is called. But actions speak louder than words, and we would really like to see them working with planning authorities, allowing environmental assessments and not sidestepping them or whatever kind of shenanigans we can imagine. We don’t

want to see shenanigans; we want to see careful, thoughtful planning.

Speaker, I would also love to know, while we're here debating building infrastructure safely, how is the government safely going to build an underwater parking garage? I realize it's not quite underwater. If it were, it would be called a marina. But there are a lot of questions around that. As the infrastructure critic, I have asked the Minister of Infrastructure for business cases. We've asked for details. The province has asked for details. We've been told a lot of things, including that the government wants to triple-check everything before they make it public, but that was a long time ago. If the government hasn't had time to triple-check this many months later, after that statement, I don't think they're doing it.

But we want to be reassured not only that the money is not going to be flushed down the drain but that things are done well. And I am curious, especially when the megagarage—I'll read from this article from Spacing. This is John Lorinc, and this is October 17. I won't get into all of the background: "The Ontario NDP revealed an Infrastructure Ontario document" that gave more evidence of that bid being suspicious, the bid for Therme. And I will tell you that it did appear to have been a rigged process. Certainly, as it says here, "The original call document made no mention of an underground parking garage, and that highly contentious add-on only surfaced in November," a year ago. "At the time, Ontario government officials told reporters and a commons committee that many of the organizations bidding for Ontario Place asked for more parking." Well, that's fine. That wasn't in the original call. Therme is the only one who got it.

But when we had received the information from the freedom-of-information request, there was a deck, and in it: "The deck contains several renderings of multi-story above-ground parking garages to be situated on the former surface lot of Ontario Place. It makes no mention of transit whatsoever, and acknowledges that 'all options are costly and ... require trade-offs.'

"Citing factors like the high water table and soil contamination, the consultants note that 'underground is the most expensive route, and more so along the waterfront,' although they also said that above-grade lots are 'generally not supported on the waterfront.'"

"IO redacted all references to possible costs."

But I do think that we realize it is more than just financial cost. If there's a cost to safety, then we have concerns. Because we don't have the accountability on this particular project or others, how on earth can we trust that when it is finished it will be safe? Because if we can't actually see the details, then I guess it's a matter of "Just trust us," and I hate that.

1520

Okay. That's more of the same; lots of folks talking about Ontario Place out in the world, that's for sure, and also very interested in the science centre. Of course, we're debating the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, and so I am glad to be able to revisit this article, "Confusion Reigns over Doug Ford's Science Centre Plan That Includes

Conservation Authority Land." What it says here about the land where the Ontario Science Centre currently is that will be demolished and replaced with something. Originally, the Premier had said with housing. But the conservation authority had written at the time and said:

"Nothing can be built on our land there but it's not just because of the TRCA, it's also city and provincial policies, which is why we were confused when the province announced affordable housing on that land..."

"It's within a ravine and considered hazardous lands because of the steep slopes and the west Don River flood plain, so I'm not sure how you would accomplish building in that area.

"We and local community members are trying to get a better understanding of what the province's agenda is with that land—there have been announcements but it's kind of unclear as to what the actual intention is."

I guess Ford announced then—ah, here we go—he's backed away from the housing plan, maybe because it's in a hazardous ravine and isn't allowed:

"Ford changed course.

"We're going to help you out with a new community centre and we're going to help you with a new school, because they're in desperate need of a school, I hear."

I think when the concern is raised that that area is not suitable for building, that there was an exception made for the science centre. Moriyama said with investment it would last 250 years at least, although the minister stood here the other day and told me that the building was 50 years old and we must acknowledge that 50 years is a long time for a building and likened it to a car and basically said it's time to move or tear it down—well, I'm paraphrasing, but you can watch the clip.

MPP Jamie West: Look at this building.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, this building is older than 100 years. But when we're talking about a concrete building being 50 years old with a potential life of 250 years and we're comparing it, the logic, to—is it a 95-year lease?

MPP Jamie West: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: A 95-year lease for a glass structure on the water—that sounds much safer than a 50-year-old concrete building.

MPP Jamie West: I think it might be a 97-year lease.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Is it a 97-year lease? I don't know. Anyway.

I am going to get back to the point: Building infrastructure safely should not be around skipping steps or who sat with whom at the wedding. And, Speaker, fun fact: I just had a wedding, which was lovely.

Applause.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much. I appreciate the congratulations, but I'm setting it up. I just got married, which is exciting news. And also exciting news: We gave out little wedding favours that were little maple syrup bottles. I didn't give out a single MZO. There is another way.

But, Speaker, the point is—

Hon. David Piccini: Did you at least give out a parks pass?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That was a good line.

When we're talking about building this province, when we're talking about building the infrastructure, when we're talking about building the future, we want to be able to tell the future that we did it well, that we have the receipts, that we consulted, that we planned things properly, that we factored in the future when it comes to our carbon footprint, sustainability—all of these things should matter. But what we keep hearing is that things are hidden, things aren't accountable, and that's a problem.

I want to talk about broadband, because the government today has used this opportunity to talk about broadband. I'm not unhappy about that. I would like to talk about broadband. But more than that, I would like to see broadband being built. I don't know what it is specifically around this bill and the locates—I don't know which part of this bill is going to ensure that that broadband infrastructure money gets spent. I don't see how it's going to accelerate broadband expansion if the government is unwilling to spend its broadband budget.

The FAO revealed that the Ford government cut the 2021-22 rural broadband budget by \$207 million, which is more than half, and had spent only 0.6% of its reduced budget. This continues a pattern of all talk and no action from the Ford government on rural broadband expansion. And the government spent only 1.37% of its \$45.7-million broadband infrastructure budget in 2020-21, and spent 5% of its \$31.8-million broadband budget in 2019-20.

So is all of that money that has been put aside for broadband—is that just waiting for locates? Is that what we're waiting for, because if so, then I am going to wholeheartedly support this—well, I mean, what's not to support in this particular bill? But how come we're still waiting for broadband? Why won't you spend the money? We'll work with you to find—if there's some issue, some technical thing in the way, we'll support that. Everybody wants broadband. I don't see that as a partisan issue.

Speaker, with the time that I have left, I want to continue talking about building infrastructure safely and the need to engage and employ and listen to qualified professional engineers.

I had the opportunity to meet with the professional engineers from the government of Ontario, and their union is PEGO, Professional Engineers Government of Ontario. They represent all the professional engineers and Ontario land surveyors who work directly in the Ontario public service—so in the OPS, the engineers and the Ontario land surveyors. They should be working in all of the relevant ministries. They are responsible for delivering some of the largest infrastructure projects in the province. They write standards, codes and regulations. They approve major industrial projects and enforce and regulate environmental projects and operations. They do a lot of important stuff. They have eyes on the things that we don't get to see. This includes the provincial highway network, the Ontario building code, land surveying, food safety, workplace safety, safe drinking water and clean air. These are

professional engineers who do a lot of good work and heavy lifting in the province, in the OPS, for the government of Ontario.

As they had shared, as Ontario grows, its infrastructure and public service needs are growing too. As Ontario builds, it needs safe and well-designed highways, clean water and infrastructure that people can rely on. PEGO members are an in-house, cost-effective resource, and they play a vital part in overseeing more than \$100 billion in Ontario's critical infrastructure assets.

Why am I telling you this? Well, I'm telling you this not just because I appreciate engineers—I don't always like playing board games with them because they think inside out and backwards at the same time. But we need them. And because of chronic understaffing, under-resourcing and uncompetitive compensation for in-house engineers, it's already hampering the ability of major projects. They're leaving. We can't hire qualified folks to do the work.

It's my understanding—and someone can correct me, but I don't think that we have any professional engineers who work at the Ministry of Energy, which is unexpected. But they work in different government ministries.

The government is rapidly losing its best engineering resources and being forced to rely on more and more expensive outside contractors and losing the valuable institutional experience of PEGO members. In-house engineers are also in the best position to do threat assessments and risk management—underinvest, and they will miss systemic risks. They're in a good position because they've also signed non-disclosures and all that stuff. They have to make decisions in the best interests of Ontarians and the government, right—I think both of those things.

Thirty years ago, their members conducted approximately 40% of the engineering work in Ontario, and about 60% of the work was done by the private sector. Now, if I'm reading their graph correctly, it looks like less than 5%, as compared with almost 40% 30 years ago.

For every dollar spent on in-house engineers, Ontario spends more than \$10 on the private sector. We need engineers in nooks and crannies to make sure that things are done well. We're spending a lot of money to compensate private sector engineers—double the rate that in-house engineers are paid, and that charges the employer 200% to 300% more for the same work.

1530

I'm going somewhere with this, and it's local. Actually, I'm really glad that the minister is here because he and I share a big priority, and that is to get the GO train to Bowmanville. So I'm raising this issue hoping to put my mind at ease, to have the government put my mind at ease. I know that the minister and I both have very full inboxes. Mr. James McEwen has been writing to us for years. Mr. McEwen is a retired civil engineer. He has been sharing with us his concerns about the proposed line and where it crosses the 401. As he has put it:

“Knowing of how restricted the topography is in west Oshawa please explain to me how Metrolinx/Stantec plan to build the new railway link between the Oshawa station

and south abutment of the bridge over Highway 401 to a grade of 1% to 2% ... while utilizing a horizontal curve in compliance with national railway standards. A passenger train cannot make a sharp 90-degree turn as suggested in your documents....

“And please do not hide behind the design/build process, because as the proponent and in accordance with the Ontario EA act, Metrolinx has a duty to prove engineering feasibility with your recommended solutions.”

He goes on and he says stuff that, frankly, I don’t super understand. But when I read words like, “A diesel locomotive cannot descend a 4% grade and make a sharp 90-degree turn into the existing Oshawa station,” I think, gee, I hope someone can put his mind at ease—and mine—and all of the people of Oshawa.

He goes on to say a number of things: “To be clear, this submission does not represent engineering recommendations but rather it is information for better minds to consider.”

But as he says, “One of the basic rules of civil engineering is to never design a sharp/tight horizontal alignment at the base of a steep railway grade as is currently implied with option 2 in west Oshawa, Ontario....

“In my opinion the option 2 alignment is flawed as it was based upon economics and not safety.

“Public safety is my primary concern with the Metrolinx proposal in west Oshawa.”

Speaker, I am putting this on the record because I would like to be reassured that I don’t have to put it on the record. Because by the time we’re at this point in the project—we’re getting a train, and we’re really excited—we’ve been debating how the region is going to be able to build stations. I have thoughts on that, but I am glad that we’re going to be able to build stations. But I am putting this on the record because, not only is it that gentleman who is saying, “Please, please put my mind at rest; please show me the feasibility steps; please show me the math; show me the engineering”—but you know what? When I talked to Metrolinx and I raised this, I said, “I’m getting a lot of emails and I feel nervous about them because they keep coming, so could someone please answer him? Could someone please prove that this project is safe?” I didn’t get a real answer except, “We consult with engineers.”

But they don’t have any engineers on staff. Metrolinx does not have a single engineer on staff—true thing. They have a bajillion VPs—I think there’s a real number; it’s 29 or something like that—but they don’t have a single engineer. But they assured me that they consult with engineers.

But then you talk to the professional engineering firms who say, “The government doesn’t call us for stuff anymore. When we make submissions, it kind of goes into a black hole and then they go ahead anyway.” And when the engineering firms are saying, “Why aren’t we getting calls on projects?” and when it’s the engineering firms and their association who basically will say, “Metrolinx is one of the worst ones to have to deal with in terms of transparency, in terms of access,” all of that, then I get a little twitchy.

And then I have this individual, Haadhi Faizal, who is in year 1 of civil engineering at the University of Waterloo, who wrote a massive, cited paper, “Bowmanville GO Train Extension—Amended Final Report.” This individual says this about our bridge:

“In 2021, when the plant was set to reopen, Metrolinx decided to build their own bridge for GO trains east of Oshawa GO station instead of going back to the original plan. This new alignment has an extremely tight curve east of the existing Oshawa GO station, which could result in slower trains, less service capable of running on the infrastructure, tricky geometry for diesel GO trains to traverse, and could raise safety concerns due to the steep grade and its tight turning radius. Note that we are not professional engineers and these are assumptions we are making.”

Haadhi says, “In June 2023, Metrolinx held a public consultation which contained their planned infrastructure for the Bowmanville extension. When one of More Transit Southern Ontario’s (MTSO) volunteers and other members of the public asked Metrolinx about the maximum train frequency the proposed infrastructure would be able to support. Metrolinx refused to give an answer.... It is important to recognize that we are not professional engineers and we do not have access to official project information. So it is impossible for our calculations to be accurate and we are estimating to the best of our abilities. Which is why we urge Metrolinx to be more transparent and co-operative by sharing more project information and answering important questions, such as the maximum frequency the proposed infrastructure can support. Based on our analysis, the proposed infrastructure would only support three trains per hour ... in each direction, which is simply inadequate to support the over 100,000 people and jobs that are planned to be located within walking distance of the future GO stations.”

Speaker, I don’t want to jeopardize this project, so could someone from Metrolinx please put in writing that all is well, all is safe, things will be fine, trains will stay on the tracks and that indeed we do build infrastructure safely in Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Oshawa for her contribution to this debate. I heard her use the word “positive,” wanting to be positive, because this bill is a positive move forward. I also note that, despite other aspects of her speech, we can and should for the purposes of these questions now focus on Bill 153 and what it does, because it’s one of 153 bills that have been presented to this House during the session that commenced in August 2022.

So on that note and to be positive—and I think the member used the word “balanced” as well—would she agree with this statement from Alectra on X:

“The government’s balanced approach through this legislation will support the timely delivery of important construction projects, protect electricity customers from rate increases, and ensure the safety of workers and the

public while protecting underground energy infrastructure.”

In light of that, does she agree with that positive comment and that that’s a reason to support the bill?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, I would hope it does all of those things. You got the letter from the folks who interact with Ontario One Call and locates far more than I would. But I will say that anyone that we have talked to in the field is glad to have the government’s ear when it comes to safety and the locate process, because as we all talk about in this room, we want timely infrastructure and we want predictable timelines. So if this works towards it, that’s great.

Still, though, the question from the northern members and others around when it’s supposed to be five or 10 days and it’s a month or a month and a half—I don’t know yet how we’re going to address their concerns. Hopefully, that is something we’re all working towards.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Oshawa for her one-hour lead on Bill 153, Building Infrastructure Safely Act.

In the last part of her debate, she emphasized the safety part, the safety issue. One of the phrases she used was she said this government puts out bills sometimes and says, “Just trust us.”

So my question to the member: This government has been making major changes to the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act for probably the third time in less than two years: Bill 23, which is the More Homes Built Faster Act, and Bill 93, Getting Ontario Connected Act, which is a broadband concern. Is this just another example of this government’s failure to properly consult on those earlier changes? What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: You’re right. We have seen other bills that focus on this particular piece of legislation that were—not before us, but the one that we are amending. I think probably we will end up seeing more tweaks or more changes down the road, because when I spoke to the folks at Ontario One Call, they did explain that they are still growing and figuring out some of that.

So I really hope that any changes we see in the future are based on their input and, certainly, the excavator side and the infrastructure owners, because we absolutely have to clear any backlogs or address any challenges to efficient service delivery, and especially when it comes to construction, we want to make hay while the sun shines and we want to be able to dig while the ground is not yet frozen—all of those things. I think we’re going to continue to see those changes and I hope the government keeps listening.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Oshawa for her remarks. Actually, I always enjoy hearing

the contributions of our professional engineers. Thank you for echoing their statements.

I come from municipal government previously and was actually involved with some of the underground locates, the good, bad and ugly. I know that about 44% of Ontario One Call’s 847 members are municipalities, and that means a lot. A significant portion of the locate requests exist to ensure the continued safety of our neighbourhoods, but I really see this as a way to avoid denying Ontarians improved services designed to help them.

We’re not looking to cut through this bill. We’re looking to actually bolster the practice that’s already standard across North America in terms of getting the dedicated locates and the fees. So I’d like to ask the member opposite whether she values constructing more homes to bring down the cost of housing?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would be very glad to see responsible construction move forward, and I think if this is a piece of that that has been in the way, then by all means, let’s deal with that. I don’t think for a second that this piece of legislation is what has been in the way of building broadband. I think there’s maybe a bit of political will to spend the money or there’s something else that is holding it up.

I am absolutely supportive of construction moving forward. We have to be listening to those who do the work but also those who are trying to do it responsibly, work in partnership with the planning departments of municipalities so that we don’t take one step forward and have to take two steps back and undo the harm. The member was here while I shared that fun story about the 50-storey building built in the flight path. I say “fun story” because it wasn’t built and no one died, but the fact that that could have been allowed to happen—let’s do things responsibly. I am in support of that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Oshawa, who always puts out a very thorough debate here in the Legislature and who I’m always grateful to have the opportunity to listen to and learn from. She talked a lot about concerns with Metrolinx and the building troubles that we see within our GO systems, our train systems, our LRT systems. We have definitely seen many issues with Metrolinx and building, whether it be in a timely manner, whether it be issues with the actual infrastructure once it’s complete. Yet we have this bill in front of us, Building Infrastructure Safely Act, and I don’t see anything in this act that would prohibit things from going wrong in that sense in the future. The CEO, Phil Verster, is making \$1 million a year. Is this bill reflective of what we’re actually seeing within the Metrolinx world?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Anything I’ve heard about interacting from Metrolinx, from the engineering firms, from the folks trying to get access to them and in a timely way—it’s such a mess, guys. I have stood in this House and I have asked you to justify extending Phil Verster’s contract or why you don’t fire him. I would love to see any metric that he has met. If you’ve got them, share them,

because the way that it looks is that Metrolinx is on the wrong track. When we've got people with engineering backgrounds, not practising engineers, who are flagging an issue—and maybe that issue could be put to rest—then why can't we get that? So Metrolinx, I think, needs the government to put a pretty careful eye on them and how they are indeed conducting business, because it has to be transparently. And for goodness' sakes, could they hire an engineer? Please, could they hire an engineer? Thanks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Quick question.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaking of Bill 153, again, it's not a bill that does everything on every issue. It's designed for a specific focus.

Is the member opposite pleased with the endorsement of Enbridge Gas of this bill, as well as the Ontario Energy Association? Because it does apply to both a small building project, like a homeowner building a fence, as well as large infrastructure projects. It's about efficiency. It's about One Call. It's about safety and moving forward. Doesn't the member opposite support that?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: If Enbridge is supportive of this, that's good. I mean, all of the infrastructure owners have to live with this. But considering that they were the ones looking at recouping some costs with the \$200 fee, it will be interesting to see how they find that money elsewhere. It's my understanding that they're tracking the costs and whatnot and that may eventually be borne out by the ratepayer, and that's a different conversation and not in this bill.

But I think if Ontario One Call and the government continues to work with the infrastructure owners as well as the excavators to make sure that things can move forward, that's good, but let's also bear in mind that the ratepayer ultimately doesn't need to carry the weight of these changes or any others.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 153, the Building Infrastructure Safely Act. It's a pleasure to have sat here and listened to most of the debate, and it's been very good, very interesting, to hear the give and take.

I want to speak a little bit about the formation of this original bill. It mandates Ontario One Call to serve as a single point of contact for all underground infrastructure locate requests. Ontario One Call's core activities include, among others:

- receiving requests from excavators for the location of underground infrastructure—and they get over one million requests per year, just to get that on the record;

- registering all members—that's all owners or operators of underground infrastructure in Ontario;

- promoting compliance through progressive enforcement actions, reviewing and mediating complaints, to ensure compliance with the act, including that its members respond to locate requests in a timely manner; and

- promoting safe excavation and digging practices, including education and awareness about the requirement to call or, as we say today, click before you dig.

All owners or operators of underground infrastructure must register as members with Ontario One Call. Ontario One Call's members include oil/gas, electrical and telecommunications utilities and all municipalities that own or operate underground infrastructure in Ontario.

Before an excavator can commence a dig, they must submit a locate request to Ontario One Call. All members that own or operate underground infrastructure that may be affected by a dig, or dedicated locators on their behalf, are then required to mark out the ground location where the excavation will take place.

As of March 2023, Ontario One Call has over 847 members and approximately 372 municipal partners. I think that's out of 444 in the province of Ontario, so we're getting there.

It's a long way from when this legislation was first introduced by the member at the time from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Paul Miller, a former member of this House, a member of the NDP at the time, and myself. We introduced this legislation.

I remember my very first meeting about this legislation. My staff told me over in the boardroom—this is in opposition—“There are a number of people here to see you, something about excavations.” I said, “Really?” I had met somebody a couple of nights before. In passing, they were talking about all the problems they had with excavations. They were working in the city of Toronto and they said how difficult it was to get an excavation permit, all the hoops you had to jump through. I said, “I know what you mean because I came out of the construction industry before I got here.” The guy said, “You understand what we're doing?” I said, “Yes. I had to do permits myself for my company at the time, Nova Chemicals, back in Sarnia–Lambton.” He said, “Don't go away,” and he ran over and he brought their government relations person over and another individual from one of the companies that were there. He says, “This guy knows what we do. He understands our work.”

1550

I give him my business card—I think it was a Thursday night; I remember I had my luggage with me. I was catching the train to go home. That was back when I took the train back and forth when Via Rail service was better, but that's a story for another day.

Anyway, on the Monday or Tuesday I showed up at my office, forgetting all about this discussion the week before, and these guys all showed up. She said, “You'd better get over there. There's people from Union Gas, Enbridge, there's Bell Telephone and a bunch of lawyers.” I said “Uh-oh, when you've got the lawyers showing up too, I don't know what I've got myself in for.” The lawyers in the House know what I'm getting at.

So I went over to the boardroom. There were these two ladies and these gentlemen there and, like I said, they represented the industry—natural gas, Enbridge etc.; Bell Telephone—and excavating companies as well, Ontario sewer and watermain, Ontario road builders, a number of them were there. And they said, “We're so frustrated. Every time we think we're going to get this bill they

change the minister on us, so we have to start all over again, trying to explain what we want.” And I said, “That sounds odd.” They said, “No, it happens all the time.” This wasn’t this government; it wasn’t the NDP; it was the Liberals. But they hear enough about them, I’m not going to denigrate them any more than they get denigrated here. I won’t be doing that. But it was under them.

Anyway, he said, “Yes. In fact, the last minister we talked to, we were in there for this meeting and the minister sat there and told us we already had this legislation.” He said, “We looked at each other and we didn’t want to call them a liar”—which is a word you can’t use in here, but I’m not talking about anybody in this room, so I’ll withdraw that if that’s an issue. Anyway, he said, “We pretty near gave up. What do you think we could do, Mr. Bailey?” And I said, “Well, all I can think of is I could introduce a private member’s bill, give it some legitimacy. It would get debated in the House, it would be given a bill number and that would give it an imprimatur”—is that the word—“give it a little bit of cachet in there House.” I never dreamed that I’d get it passed. This was one of my first private member’s bills.

We did that, drafted it with all of their input, of course. The first time it wasn’t successful, so then I approached the MPP from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—Paul Miller at the time. I approached him to get the NDP on side. I thought, “This is such a reasonable bill. All they’re asking for is safety and we should be able to get this implemented.” I got them on side.

At the time the Liberals were a minority government and they couldn’t get anything passed. Nothing could get through the House. Everything had ground to a halt, so they were desperate at the time to get their budget passed and we were—reluctant may be the word, or recalcitrant. Anyway, we were reluctant to let them pass anything, especially their budget. So we said, “We need at least three private members’ bills passed from our side” and the NDP said the same thing. The Liberals had some private members’ bills they wanted to pass. As they say, when you watch legislation being produced, it’s like watching sausage making.

At the end of the day, they got their budget, I got my private member’s bill and the rest is history. And here we are 10, 12 years later and we’re improving that bill, which, at the time, I’ll be honest, I never dreamt would have come to the point that it has today, with these improvements made to it about safety and other issues.

It was a very interesting time to work with my colleagues from the other side of the House and to get a bill passed. We travelled around quite a bit promoting it, Mr. Miller and I, at the time, to different venues. It’s good to see it back here today. I know it’s going to do a lot of good, as it has already, but this only can get better.

We have a positive reaction from stakeholders: “The importance of the services Ontario One Call provides cannot be overstated. The identification of underground infrastructure is a necessary safety measure in construction, and the industry greatly contributes to our government’s goal of building 1.5 million new homes by 2031.

Working with our stakeholders, such as Ontario One Call’s members and other related industries, allows us to streamline our productivity and ensure these projects are well managed, promoting the welfare and growth of our communities.

Speaker, with the province gearing up to build these homes and critical infrastructure of the future, this proposed legislation, if passed, will improve stakeholders’ ability to build more efficiently.

The ministry echoes the appreciation for the Ontario One Call work that they do every day, day in and day out, to keep workers and communities safe across this province. During the summer, the ministry engaged in meaningful discussions with stakeholders regarding several suggested measures aimed at improving locate delivery requirements and mitigating the financial burdens associated with providing locates. Throughout these discussions, we explored potential solutions aligned with our government’s commitment to building a stronger, safer and more connected province, and the ministry identified widespread consensus on the need to enhance local delivery to better meet those goals. Whether it’s building homes, enhancing public transit or expanding access to high-speed Internet, which, I might say, a lot has taken place back in Sarnia–Lambton and Lambton–Kent–Middlesex over the last couple of years, with the dedicated locator system in place.

The importance of One Call to the construction industry can’t be overstated. Both Ontario’s economy and our population continues to see unprecedented growth year over year, and in order to accommodate the needs of this dynamic modern economy of ours, our government must continue to ensure the efficient delivery of services to our people and the businesses of Ontario. By working towards improved standards and practices in our most vital industries, we can help foster innovation, job creation and increased productivity—something which this proposed legislation would do, if passed, to meet our goal to build 1.5 million homes by 2031.

I’d like to expand on the important role that One Call plays in construction and how this legislation will further support builders as they work alongside us to build a stronger Ontario.

Underground infrastructure can be found all around us. That is why, in order to guarantee continued safe digging practices, it is essential that we further strengthen One Call’s ability to bridge the gap between those who are planning to dig and the information necessary to keep them and their communities safe. Thanks to the ministry’s thorough consultation process, we have found unanimous support from builders and infrastructure owners across this province. So in order to continue supporting the growth of the economy, this proposed legislation would, if passed, deliver a number of changes that would strengthen One Call’s contributions to our province, such as by prohibiting underground infrastructure owners and operators from charging for locates, enhancing the rules around locates to be smarter and more efficient to get projects completed. We are also expanding the dedicated locator model.

Speaker, through this legislation, we have heard about proposed changes to enhance the delivery of underground locate services. We know there is unanimous consent on the need for this province to modernize services and invest in our future. One aspect of this proposed legislation is the expansion of the dedicated locator model, which is designed to streamline, speed up and improve the locate delivery process from start to finish.

That being said, while we know that the continued improvement of services is a must, I would like to dwell a little bit more on the Building Infrastructure Safety Act. This proposes a number of changes that will drastically improve the safety and efficiency of underground locates. One particularly interesting aspect of this legislation is the expansion of the dedicated locator model, which I've already referred to. This model is currently used in broadband development projects and has proven to be quite successful. By expanding this model to all other kinds of projects, we can help cut costs and increase locate efficiency, thanks to the use of just one skilled, dedicated locator that can perform all the required locates.

Through Bill 153, our government is delivering impactful policy that addresses the construction needs.

Madam Speaker, the impact of Bill 153 on Ontarians, if One Call is passed—would have a major impact that would be felt in communities across Ontario. A wide variety of businesses and industries would benefit greatly from these proposed changes, such as construction firms, telecommunications providers, locators, excavators and even municipal governments. Wherever you look, locate service providers are needed. That's why we must continue to ensure that the public remains safe and that local infrastructure remains protected and intact. Through you, Madam Speaker, I will explain the legislation and the impact it will have on Ontario and those major benefits as well.

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The Building Infrastructure Safety Act will directly impact the construction industry, including utilities, municipalities, telecommunications companies and locate service providers, as we've already mentioned. Everywhere you look, there's high support for faster locates, which in turn will ensure that the public not only remains safe but the infrastructure responsible for the sustainment of our economy and our population continues to thrive and grow. The ministry intends to hold consultations with stakeholders that will help us determine the regulatory outcomes of much of this bill's proposal and address the public's concerns and needs in order to keep them safe.

I'd like to dwell a little bit on inter-jurisdictional comparison. To go back to the first stages of the bill: I was asked to go to the Senate in Ottawa and speak about this bill 10 or 12 years ago, because it was a bit unique at the time and the member from Alberta that invited me down wanted to implement the same bill in Alberta, and they wanted to implement it across Canada because a lot of the federal jurisdiction doesn't respect provincial jurisdiction. So, anyway, I had a great trip down there, got to go to the Senate, speak before their committee, and there was unanimous support in that committee to implement something

like this bill. And like the locators said at the meeting to the Senate and had said to me prior to that, Ontario is always the big nut to crack. If we can get this bill implemented in Ontario with its vast resources, vast underground infrastructure, 40% of the economy, we can get this bill across the rest of the country. And so that was—I thought about it as I was reading some of the notes here; I thought back to this being inter-jurisdictional.

Mr. Speaker, with these new proposed legislative changes, Ontario would be making groundbreaking strides towards our leadership in the public safety space. If this bill and amendments were to pass, there would be significant changes to locate deliverers that would put us at the forefront of the industry. Ontario has a history of being a leader in this country when it comes to innovative legislation. Bill 153 will allow for a new voluntary one call to dig regime that would set up standards across Canada, and in fact North America, for years to come.

Through you Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit more about these potential changes and how they would compare to other counterparts in our other provinces. In Canada, Ontario would, through Bill 153, be the only jurisdiction with a legislated one call to dig regime. This means that all underground infrastructure owners and operators must become members of Ontario One Call and provide underground infrastructure locations when called upon in a timely manner, not only to assist vital construction and development but to ensure the public's safety and reliance on critical infrastructure. Other provinces, such as British Columbia and Alberta, have voluntary one call to dig regimes now which get the job done, but here in Ontario we're taking it one step further with the leadership of this minister and the Doug Ford government and his two PAs to take it one step further. There's no legislated locate delivery times anywhere else in Canada, and with this proposed legislation we are setting Ontario up to continue to be a national leader in this and many other spaces.

I see my time is going away here, so I'll touch on some past amendments and improvements. Mr. Speaker, locates are an incredibly complex subject that has impacts and implications across many different areas of our government. Difficult to understand—often there are many misconceptions. In the past, locate delivery took an extremely long time and was an unnecessarily strenuous and expensive process which also brought safety concerns for the general public. In the last year, things have changed significantly for the better thanks in large part to our ability to better communicate valuable information to those who need it as well as our innovative approaches to existing systems in every sector that we have made those changes in.

In April 2022, the One Call act was updated to support timely locate delivery. Amendments to the Ontario underground notification system have made notable improvements surrounding delivery cost, efficiency and timeliness. The results speak for themselves. There was a drastic increase in this year's total amount of completed locates when compared to the year prior.

We also enabled One Call to have the power to administer monetary penalties where applicable, in order to

maintain and enforce the highest quality of delivery anywhere. To achieve this success, the ministry consulted with various stakeholders on various proposed measures to enhance locate delivery requirements.

When I first got into this—I'm pretty well out of time here, but I worked in industry, like I say, before I came here, and I was in charge at my place of business of Ontario One Call locates—well, there was no Ontario One Call then, but excavation permits. I had to go and sign for them for my boss and make sure everything was okay. When I left there, I assumed everybody was doing locates like we did at Nova Chemical. We were a little ahead on safety around, I think, quite a bit of the rest of the province. I was really surprised when I came to Queen's Park and these people approached me and said, "No, we need something like you're used to in industry province-wide."

So I was proud to work with members of the opposition at that time to introduce that legislation, have it passed, see it implemented, see it lead to safety—lots of loss reductions, safety and health—and I'm just proud that the minister and his PAs have upgraded this legislation to make it even better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions, please.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I was listening attentively to your presentation. I know I have this problem in my riding a lot, with locates. The problem is the timelines. They weren't respecting the timelines, and in this bill, I don't see how this will change.

My question is, how is this government going to make sure that locate requests are fulfilled in a timely way? Because this was the problem, and I don't see this changing, especially up north, because up north, services are limited and far apart. So how is the government going to make sure that these timelines are respected?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the member. That's an issue that I know came up with the MPP at the time, MPP Miller, and I. We worked with Sudbury because we wanted to make sure we'd get—there was a member from Sudbury, and I don't know who it was now; they're not here now. We thought, "They're going to hold back on this. Let's get in on this legislation." So I think we established an office in Sudbury or somewhere for Ontario One Call. We thought that might sweeten the pot a little bit to get that member on-side.

But I rely on the minister and his staff. The bill enforces through regulation. I know what you mean. I hear that down home in southwestern Ontario too, about timely locates. I could tell you, I've got a list of contractors who have come to see me in the past. They've got all these projects they want to do—water mains, sewers—and they can't get at them, and so I'm the one they always call, even if it's not even in my riding, because they know this legislation was mine. I'm kind of hung with it for forever and a day, so I rely on the minister and staff—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I certainly want to thank the member from Sarnia-Lambton for really conceiving of

this and having had to work in this system for many, many years. It's dramatically improved thanks to your leadership.

I know that this iteration of the service is something new for today. We've had other changes in the past number of years, and I know just from the days before One Call was developed to more recent changes, much has changed in order to make sure that this service is provided effectively. So I'm hoping, through you, Speaker, that the member could explain exactly how the proposed legislation is different from the previous amendments that have been made.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the member for that question. Yes, it was very complicated, especially in the old days—back in my earlier time here.

But anyway, the city of Toronto, for example, was a great example of this, because with the amalgamation in the City of Toronto Act, they brought all these municipalities together and they all had their own water lines, their own sewer lines, their gas lines. A contractor told me at the time that he'd have to make anywhere upwards of a dozen phone calls before he could even do any excavations to just find out where those utilities were.

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So with that, this bill here, my bill, a very simple bill at the time, has certainly come a long way. I know it's going to be improved even more through its use.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Sarnia-Lambton for those comments. It was very interesting to hear some of that history, which was new to me, and to hear of the member's involvement and extensive knowledge on this file.

Given the member's extensive experience on the file, I am genuinely curious, since this is the third update to the system in three years, why these changes weren't able to be integrated into one of the earlier updates into the Ontario One Call system.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the member from Ottawa. I think better is always possible, in this province especially, and I think that's always a goal we all should have here, to make legislation better. The legislation that I introduced at the time—it was requested. It was pretty simple at the time, because we had nothing to model it on. Anyway, I could tell you all kinds of stories about it, but I know I've got a limited amount of time.

I still get phone calls, like I say, all the time. The tile drainage people—the people that install tile drainage in the agricultural community—are on me all the time because their work changes with the weather. They can be in one part of Lambton county where it just pours rain and they can't work any longer and they have to move to go somewhere else where it's fairly dry. Well, then they've got to try to get their locates, because they can't start working without their locates. So we've worked with them to make that better.

Hey, could it be better yet? Yes, it can be, and we'll make it that way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I note for the record—I think it is well known—that the member for Sarnia-Lambton

was first elected in 2007. In that first term, the member would have been in opposition with a majority government on the other side of the House, and then the next term, when he was re-elected, that was a minority Parliament, if I can call it that. That's where this 2012 legislation that we're proposing to amend came to be. And then, of course, in opposition again with a majority government on the other side of the House, and then elected on government benches now twice in a row. As a senior parliamentarian, how do the changes in this bill make you feel as a parliamentarian now on the government benches compared to when you initiated it on the opposition benches?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Speaker, through you, to the minister, I'm very proud, actually. I have had a number of private member's bills passed, but two of the most substantial ones—I shouldn't say this; maybe my constituents are watching—but two of the most, I think, important ones are this Ontario One Call bill because of the lives it saves and the damages it's prevented to industry. We always see about a house blowing up—somewhere there's a gas leak in the house that's come back through a trench and it's been ignited by a hot water heater. Thankfully, those seem to have been reduced.

The other bill I'm the most proud of is my food tax credit bill that helps supply fresh food to the Good Shepherd type things. Those are two—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

The member from Hamilton Mountain, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his debate and for the work that he's done bringing Ontario One Call. I was here when this legislation was passed. As well, he did it with a member of the New Democrats, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, which was a great initiative.

Now we're seeing this come before us, so as it's grown, the needs and the changes have unfolded. A lot of complaints which I hear in my office also are the delays in getting those calls done and the locates done on time for the project to move along as is necessary. I don't believe there's anything in this bill, whether it be enforcement, whether it be fees, for not getting it done in the five to 10 days as proclaimed, or whether it's incentives if they do get it done in a timely manner.

Does the member have any thoughts or insights into the next process that's going to have to come to ensure that locates are done in a timely manner, particularly when we're in a housing crisis?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Speaker, through you to the member from Hamilton, I think one of the things that I talked about with the Minister of Labour at the time—the former Minister of Labour—was how to make the locator profession more of a craft. Because what happens is, they'll hire someone, they'll train them, these different companies, and as soon as they get very knowledgeable, they move on to something more lucrative that pays them more money.

So it's been a real, constant struggle for the industry to keep staff working for them. It's been a real struggle in

that respect, so I think the sooner we can do more to make it a meaningful career for these people—because it's very important to the economy to have these locators to get these projects done. So I think that's the goal. I think we should strive for us to make the—

Interruption.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Is that my thing doing that? Oh, sorry. It's my hearing aids. It's that new technology, right? Anyway, I apologize for that, to the Chair.

I think that's one of the big things. That's always been an issue, the recruitment and the retention of staff. I had a guy, 75, that I sent to GTel, one of the locate companies, and when he found out they wanted him to work six days a week—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Before I start talking about the bill, I want to thank the member again from Sarnia–Lambton and the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek at the time, MPP Paul Miller, for bringing this bill forward.

I pulled out the Hansard just to kind of glance over some of the comments that were being made at the time, and one of the interjections I thought was kind of interesting—someone interjected, “Even in Alaska.” And Mr. Bob Bailey answered, “And that's even in Alaska. So we need this bill in Ontario to do the same thing.”

So even in Alaska at the time this bill was being debated—that was a question that you were all wondering, how far this One Call bill was going to go. I think it was called, “Call before you dig”—that was the slang term of the bill at the time.

We're glad the government is having conversations about safety when it comes to One Call and all the underground infrastructure that's underneath us that needs to make sure we can build on the land. According to the government, they want to make sure their infrastructure projects are being built, and being built safely, so that's very important.

That leads me to talk about this publication in Ontario One Call and some stats that tell the story about safety. It's based on information that was released from the ORCGA 2022 DIRT Report. According to that report, there were 4,769 reported damages to buried infrastructure, which is an increase of 8% from the previous year, averaging 19 damages per day; 37% of reported damages were due to digging without locates, not requesting and/or digging before receiving a locate; 61% of damages caused by people digging without locates were on hazardous and dangerous infrastructure.

Quite frankly, what happens is, these damages are a safety factor, but they also cost billions of dollars in repairs and put people at risk. So Ontario One Call plays a vital role in promoting safe digging. I'm going to quote what they said: “We do not provide the actual locates,” says Simpson. “We are the one-stop shop that connects people who want to dig with the owners of infrastructure. There is no cost to request a locate through Ontario One Call and

you will reduce your risk," says Simpson. "It's a win-win."

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That's something I don't know if people understand: that when you do call Ontario One Call, they're not performing the locates; they are actually going to the infrastructure owners to perform those locates. I think that's very important to note.

The other thing that I looked up on the Internet—I'm going to use my phone, because we need to educate people—because, when you listen to those stats, people are not informed as how that they should proceed before they dig. I have to take off my glasses to read my phone. I'm going to look up some questions that the average person should know before they dig.

So is it illegal to dig without locates in Ontario? "It's the law. Under Ontario law, it is illegal to dig without having natural gas lines located.

"Digging or excavating could damage the network of water and sewer pipes, gas lines, telephone lines, hydro cables or cable television lines that could be located under the ground of your lot."

Next question: Who do you call before you dig in Ontario? Ontario One Call. "Ontario One Call is a public safety administrative authority and the communication link between those wanting to dig and buried infrastructure owners who are required to provide locates."

Next question: How deep are utility lines buried in Ontario? It's 24 inches—I didn't know that; I don't know if anybody else knows that, but this is important information. If we're going to make a requirement by law, we should educate the public, so that they know how to exercise their responsibilities under those laws. "If you call Enbridge Gas Distribution or Union Gas and asked them what the standard depth of a residential gas line is in Ontario, they will tell you the answer is 24 inches. This is the depth specified by the CSA standards."

And then the next one is, what happens if you dig without locates? Digging without locates results in a \$10,000 fine; failure to comply with requirements, including digging expired locates, an \$8,000 fine.

As you can see, there's a lot of responsibility to everyone who decides that they want to dig, and the general public should be aware of their responsibilities when they decide to dig. So we need to do a better job, I think, of communicating that and informing the public when they want to dig in their own backyard or they think they're doing something innocuous and it could cause a lot of problems and financial disparity as well, if they have to pay these exorbitant fines. That's what I wanted to bring to light when we're talking about the infrastructure safety bill, but we need to address the public awareness piece in order to get that safety to comply with what legislation we are proposing today.

I also want to talk about the workers that work and create our infrastructure, because they're very important and they're very key to the fact that we're able to enjoy all these services above ground. It's a very dangerous job, quite frankly, to be digging underground for infrastructure.

I say that because construction is a very risky occupation, and there are a lot of workers that go to work and don't come home to their families. Our construction workers, our trade workers, our skilled workers, they've built this province and they need safety when it comes to the work they do, but they also need a lot of credit and regard for the work that they've put in so that we can have our homes that we live in, schools that we attend, this Legislature that we are speaking in now.

But I say that because I had four brothers. One of them has passed away—my oldest brother, Serafim—and I have three brothers remaining. Including my father, all the men in my family worked in construction, either at some point or still are working in construction today.

My father was a pipe layer, and so what he would do: He would lay the pipes—this is the water that we get through the pipes that we're enjoying. He would be underground in a pit, a ditch of sorts, laying these pipes. And so, what happened was—and we're talking about safety here—there was quite the rainfall when my father was laying these pipes. So, for whatever reasons the employer didn't understand that when there's wet earth and you're underground, it can actually bury people. So my father was laying these pipes, and there was a landslide and it covered him up to his waist. Of course, he was injured, and thank goodness he didn't perish because, again, we had six kids in our family and my mom was a stay-at-home mom. Thank goodness he didn't perish, but he broke his leg quite extensively. He suffered from that injury for the rest of his life, quite frankly, but he was able to be rehabilitated. That was the good news. He went back to work at a Formrite factory—that was a tube auto factory at the time—and was able to work there nights. He was the janitor; he was the person that cleaned up.

That's why I bring up the safety piece when it comes to underground infrastructure, because it's safety that we find the locate, but it's also part of safety that when workers are creating that construction and those underground infrastructures, we pay very close attention to make sure they're doing it safely so that they can return home to their families.

The other thing I want to talk about when it comes to the bill is that back in the day, when the MPP from Sarnia-Lambton was discussing—there was a question just around here about the northern situation that one of our colleagues asked. I pulled out the Hansard, as I said, and there were some quotes in here from the debate at the time. This member was a Liberal member, and she stated:

"I was a member of the committee that studied Bill 8, and we heard many views and strong concerns. Mandating Ontario One Call as the single one-call service provider creates a monopoly that underground infrastructure owners would have no choice in joining. Unfortunately, it would have significant negative impacts on other one-call service providers that already exist in the province of Ontario. It would effectively put organizations like Dig-Line and DigNORTH out of business....

"The three existing organizations in Ontario that respond to excavators' locate requests, namely Ontario

One Call, DigNORTH and Digline, have made strides to ensure worker and public safety through their effective routing systems. And because the cost of the one-call utility locating and marking service is paid for by utility members. Our current voluntary one call to dig system protects the value of taxpayer investments in underground infrastructure.” That was what they had said about the monopoly that was going to happen.

Then they also said here, “Municipalities, through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, have told us that they cannot and will not support mandatory participation in this one call to dig system. NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, also opposes Bill 8. We all have an obligation to listen closely to these representatives of our municipalities across the entire province. AMO and NOMA have determined their position because many small municipalities with minimal underground infrastructure would be forced to be members in a program they don’t need.”

Now, that’s in hindsight. If you ask them today, “Is this program something that was effective in your region,” I would venture to say that they would say yes, but I haven’t reached out to NOMA and AMO to find out if they’ve changed their perspective on this bill. But one of the things—and I’ll go to the bill, if I can find it here. Under section 5.1 of the bill, they actually have here:

“Call centre in northern Ontario

“(2) The corporation shall operate, as part of its call system, at least one call centre located in northern Ontario.”

So I hope, because the government has decided to create a call centre specifically in northern Ontario, that they will address some of the concerns around seasonal digging, timing, workforce and skilled labour in order to make sure that this is a successful process under the Ontario One Call organization for the northern sphere in our province.

The other thing the government is doing when it comes to this bill is it’s doing it in two phases, and I appreciate that because sometimes this government is in a very hasty situation, and they want to do everything so fast. And what happens when they do things fast is, as we can see, they have to sometimes backtrack—and, actually, quite frankly, a lot of backtracking lately in this Legislature. So it’s good that they’re doing this particular consultation in phases.

1630

I was impressed with the letter from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, public safety and operations policy branch. And one of the things I’m going to read from the letter—because I think it’s important that people know and listen to the consultations that are happening. So this is part of their letter:

“Specifically, we support phase 1 of the ministry’s proposal that calls for locates for large projects to be completed within 10 business days beginning in May 2024.... There also may be opportunities in phase 2 to further differentiate between dig projects based on size as recommended below.” I do agree that phase 2 needs to really take that into consideration.

They said, “The OCC and its members remain committed to working with the MPBSD and Ontario One Call on phase 2 of the proposal. While we support the ministry’s phase 1 proposal, we continue to recommend the project classification approach outlined in the Ontario Energy Association (OEA) proposal submitted on June 30, 2023, as part of an earlier MPBSD consultation....”

These are important pieces, I think, that the government has to pay attention to. And obviously, the OCC is bringing this to the government’s attention.

The first one, and I won’t get through the whole letter—I hope I will, because there are some really important points here that I want to get on record that the government should consider. They want to have further breakdown of locate requests into small and large projects as follows—and the government has these in here, but they’ve put additional comments to this:

“Emergency locate request: A locate request that is necessary as a result of a loss of service by a utility that in the circumstances is considered essential, such that the absence of the service can reasonably be expected to result in imminent or significant safety or environmental hazards or imminent threat to a person or to the public—note: This definition is unchanged.” That’s something we need to understand.

“Delivery timeline: We are not proposing a change to the current two-hour legislative timeline.” That is something that the OCC wants to keep in place, and a two-hour turnaround timeline is quite good when it’s an emergency situation.

“Standard locate request: A locate requested by the owner or tenant of a property where they reside or a locate requested for a single address plus any work associated with the address, e.g., adjacent properties or work to be done across the road from the property.

“Delivery timeline: The member shall make all reasonable attempts to provide the locate within five days from the date of submission.” That’s the standard one for timelines.

“Small project locate request: A locate request for work that exceeds the size of a standard locate request but does not meet the threshold of a large project locate request.

“Delivery timeline: The project owner must submit the locate request at least 15 days prior to the date that the proposed excavation will commence. In addition, Ontario One Call ought to have the flexibility to require that a small project locate request use a dedicated locator based on project scope.

“Large project locate request: A locate requested for a dig area that either (i) spans a distance greater than 500 metres in an urban environment or 1,000 metres in a rural setting; or (ii) will take longer than 30 days to complete, e.g., a large water/sewer replacement project, deep servicing, utility relocations, etc.

“Delivery timeline: The project owner must submit the locate request at least 30 days prior to the date that the proposed excavation will commence. The act should stipulate that a dedicated locator be used for large project requests within the same compliance timelines as ‘desig-

nated projects' under the act." That's important, because if you have these bigger projects and you have dedicated locators, I think that would improve the efficiency of getting the locator spots completed and help the infrastructure projects this government wants to continue.

"Remaining priorities to address for the cost-effective and timely delivery of locates"—this is important: "(1) Amend the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act to focus on compliance instead of penalties."

Again, we need these things to work in an efficient way. So, definitely, penalties are important, but compliance needs to be at the forefront, because if you make people comply with the rules, you have less resources on enforcing penalties. And, ultimately, if there's good compliance, there's better infrastructure projects, and it works more efficiently and quickly. You get the information quicker.

The other thing that I wanted to point out in this letter is that they have mentioned this—there are other things, but this one, I want to highlight: "The member and the excavator resource provisions should be removed from the act." I agree with that. "An alternate approach of having Ontario One Call mediate disputes of this nature is preferable and would reduce the burden placed on the Ontario lands tribunal in adjudicating these issues."

I understand that the government does not want lawsuits and recourse payments to people, the infrastructure owners, if they go over the timeline. But again, they're suggesting that there should be some type of mediation disputes rather than tying up the land tribunals with regard to these kinds of things.

So, overall, I know the lead that the member from Oshawa did says that we support this bill. It's incrementally making changes to the bill to make it run better. It's curious as to why these things weren't done previously in Bill 93 and Bill 23, but you're coming to the Legislature with this right now, and I know there's a phase 2 that's coming up to continually improve this.

One thing I have to say: I'm very positive about the fact that this government is looking at processes. Please, listen to the professionals that are giving you the advice, and don't rush through legislation and get it wrong, because, in this case, it can be detrimental to the safety of workers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I know in the riding of Essex, we have a lot of building going on, and the people doing the building projects want their locates done as fast as possible, of course. If they can't be done immediately, then they want to have a system where there's a window that they can expect to get the job done and an appointment where they can expect someone to show up. I think that's very important. It makes the process of getting excavations done timely and more efficient, and I think that the people in Essex county who are involved in building projects are going to appreciate that that system is going to continue and become a better system under the present bill.

I invite the member to comment on whether or not she thinks it's going to be welcome in her riding.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member for Essex for that question.

First, I would say that if there's going to be an expansive infrastructure project or building situation, I would hope that people are planning ahead to make sure they call Ontario One Call ahead of time, in lots of time, in order to make sure that project is successfully implemented, and safely implemented.

But, yes, I would say that this bill is going to be a welcome piece of legislation throughout all of Ontario. But, again, I have to stress that if people are not informed or educated about the one call that needs to happen, we're just going to create more problems and expense when there's infrastructure damaged underground.

But, yes, it definitely is a good way to start getting people to do that one call when there are no fees attached to the bill as well. That's very helpful.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened closely to the well-researched remarks from the member from London-Fanshawe. I always like personal parts of speeches, and she commented that many of her family members work in the construction industry. She herself has a long history in the insurance industry, so could you give us your perspective on how reducing risk actually saves not only lives, but saves a lot of money in the long run?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's very true, because when you have claims that cause damage, that means insurance companies have to pay out losses. Then, what happens is, the premiums for that excavating company or developer, those rates go up. Then, that adds to the cost of building homes. So we all know that when you're in the business of building homes, especially the private sector, they want to recover their costs plus make a profit.

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So, absolutely, if we have these things in place and people aren't causing that kind of damage and aren't putting insurance claims, that's going to minimize the risk of financial and safety and overall, hopefully, keep those insurance premiums for those business people at a standard level so that it's affordable to stay in business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I like actually the speech you gave about the importance of that type of legislation to protect the people, the workers, and the construction personnel as you told your own story, which is I know that—I heard many stories of Ontarians having different ways, but in a similar way, it is a very high risk type of job.

Also, I agree with you that education is very important, but don't you agree with me that we need the legislation to protect people? Then, we can maybe work on the education piece.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, absolutely. Safety has to start somewhere, having legislation is a good thing to protect people from hazards and from injuries. This will help, I believe, if we can find locates in a timely way. It

will help the development industry. It will also help people who are going to be digging: the workers and individuals. But legislation is only as good as what people know about it. If we have legislation but it's not getting out to people, people will be breaking the law, causing damage, hurting themselves, injuring themselves. Nobody wants to see that. So I think the member and I are on the same page—and we can do these things simultaneously as well: You can have legislation and educate the public. Governments put out ads and all other kinds of other things. This is something that could be done in conjunction with legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe for her very detailed debate this afternoon. We definitely heard her talk about education, and I agree as well that legislation is only as good as the people who know about it to be able to call that call before you dig number and make sure that locates are done safely.

We have seen several bills in front of the House regarding call before you dig, in 2012. Then, we see it included in Bill 93 and Bill 23. Now, we're seeing it, once again.

Historically, we have seen this government have to come back, time and time again, to constantly update legislation or to fix previous legislation. Could maybe the member comment on what she would like to see the government do better when it comes time to building legislation and putting bills in front of the Legislature?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I thank the member from Hamilton Mountain. I alluded to that: that this government unfortunately does things sometimes too quickly. And, often, when they do things too quickly, they don't have public consultations, on many occasions, on bills in the Legislature. So I encourage the government to make sure that they have those public consultations. They're doing that on phase 1 and phase 2, and they're doing it online, which is really great.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce really pushed the government to look at some of their recommendations. It makes a lot of sense. We are legislators; they're in the business of making things work properly and know what their members need, so having some of these extensive and dedicated locators in specific projects makes a lot of sense to me. So I hope the government will pay attention to those consultations to make the legislation really strong.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. John Jordan: I want to take the opportunity to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton for sticking with this issue for so many years. Back in January, this government announced, along with the government of Canada, \$2.3 million to expand high-speed Internet in his riding, and actually \$255 million across this province to expand high-speed Internet.

I wonder if the member opposite could comment on if they think that this bill will assist with those projects across the province.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It could be an easy answer, but the member from Oshawa talked about that as well. She talked about how there's funding set aside for broadband and it's not really being utilized. I think about the Ontario Infrastructure Bank that this government is now creating, and wondering if those two things can be paired up. Get the broadband in place because there are many rural and northern communities that don't have that, and really, it is an essential service.

So will this bill help? Sure, because if those are extensive projects, according to the OCC, and you actually dedicate locators to those massive projects, then those locates can be done more efficiently, and the money that's in reserve that the government announces for broadband can be used to actually create that infrastructure for broadband. Then yes, absolutely, we believe this would help promote that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'm pleased to rise today and address second reading of Bill 153, Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023. I'm happy to have a few moments to talk about Bill 153 because I know it has the potential to make some great improvements across our province.

The proposed legislation is significant because it addresses matters that are not often thought about but play a very important role in our lives. I know that many people might hear this and not completely recognize the importance of addressing these issues, and that's okay, but it's something we need to talk about.

When things work out there in the world, people don't often question what's happening in the chamber, but it's our job to be proactive. We've all been around big, complex systems without realizing it, whether they're in our homes or in our ridings. Systems like Ontario One Call and our underground infrastructure are integral to our daily lives, and we often overlook them because of the seamless functionality of them.

The reason these systems work so well is that we don't wait until things break to improve them. That's just a matter of foresight and good government, to take the steps before widespread problems show up.

Now, I know things don't work perfectly. No system is perfect. For instance, we're all aware of the numerous construction projects that are currently on hold due to the absence of necessary enhancements in the efficiency of delivering locate services. For our workers, any wait in the cold, wet rain of November, like we're having right now, or the baking heat of July, is waiting too long.

As the minister stated, we want this proposed legislation to be fair and balanced for everyone and make sure we are able to do it in a safe manner. I think the minister, the minister's office and ministry officials deserve a lot of credit for keeping a close eye on this issue and proactively making adjustments to accommodate the changing needs of our dynamic modern economy.

And so, Speaker, that brings me to some points in Bill 153. Minister McCarthy spoke in some detail, so I'd like to touch on those details and offer some perspective that I

think will lead us all to vote in favour of the bill and get into an effective and quicker way of being able to address the infrastructure issues we have today.

It's been a lot of hard work to get to this point, and I'm personally grateful for all the industry reps and stakeholders who have contributed so much of their time to make sure we're considering a number of well-rounded perspectives to make the system work.

During the summer, the ministry engaged in meaningful discussions with many groups aimed at improving locate delivery requirements and mitigating some of the financial burdens that are associated with providing locates. I have personally met with several stakeholders who have demonstrated a strong desire to address these challenges, and I know that this proposed legislation has carefully balanced the needs of all stakeholders.

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The minister has demonstrated a firm dedication to finding ways to improve important public safety services like Ontario One Call. I am consistently impressed with this work, and I am proud to be part of his team.

Bill 153 aims to expand this government's efforts to streamline the framework for identifying the location of underground infrastructure, known as locates.

Underground infrastructure is located across the province everywhere and anywhere. To guarantee safe excavation, it's essential to call Ontario One Call. This organization plays a vital role in connecting individuals and builders with information about the location of underground infrastructure such as electric, gas, communication, sewer and waterlines.

I can remember, before One Call, there was a house at the end of my street—I was maybe 18 years old—and there was an excavator down there, digging, and hit a gas line and blew the house right up. It was something I'd never seen before. So you think about having One Call today and what it can avoid.

Ontario One Call protects workers, communities and vital infrastructure. Bill 153 is geared towards improving efficiency and supporting the crucial infrastructure development required in Ontario today.

We've talked about infrastructure a lot in this House. For example, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing spoke at great length about the government's plans for new housing that's affordable for the hard-working people of Ontario—and the Minister of Transportation's work in building new public transportation and roads that reach every corner of Ontario; and the Minister of Infrastructure has worked tirelessly to expand high-speed Internet, expanding the broadband advantage.

With Ontario seeing significant growth—nearly half a million more people came to the province last year, and more than 170,000 net new jobs were created in the first nine months of 2023 alone—this province needs more infrastructure. Recently, the Minister of Finance talked quite a bit about the new initiative his ministry is leading with the Ontario Infrastructure Bank. And this new, arm's-length, board-governed agency will help us do just that, by enabling public sector pension plans and other trusted

institutional investors to participate in large-scale infrastructure projects across our province. Initially, I understand this will focus on long-term-care homes, which we need, affordable housing and infrastructure in the municipal, community, energy and transportation sectors. These are critical needs across Ontario, and our ministry is providing tools to accommodate this province's tremendous economic growth.

Our government understands that meeting the needs of growing communities in the province is something that taxpayers alone cannot do. We need to find new ways to build essential infrastructure by implementing good policies. These facts are clear to us. The demand for infrastructure is urgent, and it's not just about planning for the future; we must address the need to build for right now.

When I look at the concerns that are facing Ontarians, we are at a time in our history when being more connected, having more affordable homes and improving our transportation options are at the forefront of our province's continued success.

As any construction foreman will attest, these outcomes stem from a series of interconnected activities, and the strength of the chain relies on the resilience of the weakest link.

Speaker, under Premier Ford's leadership, our party recognizes the daily dedication of thousands of individuals working on these projects. These are hard-working men and women who go to work in the dark and cold so we can have better roads, sewers, homes and telecommunications.

It's not just the productivity of the worker that I worry about. When I'm in Toronto or at my home in Cambridge, or anywhere I've had the privilege to visit in Ontario, I wonder what we can do in this chamber to make life easier for the people of Ontario. Right now, I know we need to do something on making the delivery of locates more efficient so that all these infrastructure projects can get shovels in the ground to build Ontario.

I know that anyone who follows the work in this chamber probably hears the word "infrastructure" many times a day, but there's good reason for that, and that's because there are some things that only government can do. People rely on the government to do things that other organizations can't always do as well. Creating common standards is something that the government must take on. This is going to be especially true of things that are literally out of sight and very often out of mind.

When things go wrong with underground networks or pipes or cables, we can experience loss of services or dangerous accidents potentially affecting thousands of people. I will always remember, in Cambridge, years ago, when the power went out and everything went dark, people were really upset. People thought they could do their normal life, but there was no power; there was nothing.

This emphasizes the essential role of locates in safety. Whether you're planting a tree in your yard or constructing skyscrapers along the waterfront, requesting locates is a key safety measure designed to prevent outages or injuries resulting from damage to critical infrastructure. That's

why you should always call or click before you dig. It is the responsibility of the person, whether you're the homeowner or the project manager, to dig long trenches to bury stretches of cable.

The government and the Legislature bears a distinct responsibility beyond our normal individual roles in the world. The government must establish effective systems that facilitate a smooth process and set the stage for the success of others. In other words, we have to set the ground rules. One very basic thing I think we need to protect is to make sure there are obviously no financial disincentives to do the right thing, and the most important thing of all, it has to be safe—and that's safe for everyone working on it.

Subsequently, I think prohibiting underground infrastructure owners and operators from charging for locates is definitely a significant aspect of Bill 153. One Call is a free service; it has always been, and our government is ensuring this service remains free.

I remember last year, when this chamber debated the Getting Ontario Connected Act, we talked at length in this House about the great changes we were making to locate processes and the impact that was going to have on expanding broadband access to all corners of the province. I believe that the member for Brampton West, PA to the Minister of Infrastructure, spoke about this earlier in the debate. I'm impressed with all the progress that has been made in that regard.

I cannot stress enough how important the work is. Items like access to high-speed Internet are not just a small rural community thing. In my riding, I have a city, Cambridge, and I have North Dumfries township, and we still have farmers on farms that have dial-up; they'd love to have broadband.

And I know John over there—I don't know what you've got up there—

Mr. John Vanthof: Smoke signals.

Mr. Brian Riddell: Yes.

The effects of not having high-speed Internet access are not just limited to early adopters of tech anymore. Lack of high-speed Internet limits a person's ability to work from home, which a lot of people do, or have virtual medical appointments, or even keep in touch with family. It can hold back people from fully participating in their community, and we want to do what we can to help them move forward. So I appreciate the work being done, particularly at the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and the Ministry of Infrastructure, to keep moving those yardsticks forward.

It is nearly a universal industry practice all across the United States and Canada to do all these locates free of charge in the overwhelming majority of these cases. This has been the case for ages, and we must hold the standard for the future.

I heard Minister McCarthy, earlier in this debate, talking about the spiralling costs that have basically become a cycle lately that could start with one company and move to another, as he explained. I think that's a great illustration—costs that could go around and around, up and up

over time. Really, we want to make developing infrastructure easier and more efficient, so let's do things in this bill that would help achieve that.

Another aspect of Bill 153 I find particularly interesting and personally exciting is the expansion of the dedicated locator model. The expansion of this model would mean that a single dedicated locator would be able to search for all the potential underground infrastructure at a given project time. That means we aren't going to have four or five people coming out to do electrical, water, gas or whatever they're looking for.

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Currently, some construction sites can employ a different locator for each individual piece of underground infrastructure. Expanding the dedicated locator model to more project types could contribute to cost reduction and enhanced locate efficiency as a single skilled, dedicated locator is capable of handling all the necessary locates at the same time. This consolidation of these locate efforts can demonstrate the effectiveness of a unified approach to managing underground infrastructure across various projects at the same time.

At the end of the day, many aspects of construction are conducted simultaneously, and expanding the dedicated locator model is an effort to catch up with the skilled labour of most trades. Think of the time we can save.

Again, I must say, there is a lot to be said about the importance of properly locating underground infrastructure. This service is a major provider of safety on all construction sites, and safety is number one. The government will always be at the forefront of protecting workers, communities and our infrastructure networks. It is simply good policy to encourage proactive measures aimed at steadily reducing costs and time associated with construction.

Madam Speaker, I know I am drawing close to the end of my time, but I want to come back to one point I started making at the beginning in talking about infrastructure in a sort of way—I know we've talked about infrastructure a lot in this House, and I think we use that word quite a bit. It can really lose its importance over time. But I think we need to pay attention to the infrastructure we are building. Some of the things that we are building and expanding are happening very quickly. Some are being made by the private sector, some are public sector and some are a mixture of both. I think the ownership is actually kind of irrelevant. It doesn't really matter. The important point is, they are all delivering real, important things to the people of Ontario, the people who need them.

Minister McCarthy nailed it when he talked about the very proactive kinds of things that we're protecting: natural gas, high-voltage electrical cables, water, sewer, telecommunications. Take any one of those things out of your daily life for a few hours, and it's amazing how fast you miss them. I turn your Internet off in your house for an hour, and how upset are you going to be? I know Anthony would be. Or maybe the water has been turned off for repairs and you need to make dinner.

I know these are very exact examples; in some cases, we're talking about much larger, system-wide changes,

but I want to make a point that this is all infrastructure, and we need it to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving economy, to make sure it can grow along with our growing population. These aren't big, abstract systems, they're things that make a difference to people across the province in every moment of the day. We must keep these things in mind when we move forward through the process of this bill. Let's keep this thing moving, get it done and give builders the tools they need to build for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for the presentation. You know, I try to think when I listen to bills, and I always think about how it will help the people of Kiiwetinoong, and specifically how it will help the people of, sometimes I'll say, "Indian country." I say that in the way of on-reserve. I think the only thing that we have underground is probably water and sewage systems.

Mr. Guy Bourgooin: Lots of minerals, though.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: We're rich like that—the gold and everything—but yes.

And then, also, about 10 years ago or 15 years ago, fibre optic cable was installed all the way up to Pickle Lake, all the way to the reserves up in the north and all the way down to Red Lake.

How will this help the people in Kiiwetinoong?

Mr. Brian Riddell: How it will help your community and your riding is the fact that we can have one locator go up and do the whole job instead of waiting for two companies or three companies to go up there and do the same work. This will speed things up and make it better for the people doing the work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for the opportunity to talk and ask a question to the member from Cambridge. I wanted to give a little bit of applause to the previous member on the House side who talked about his dedicated work that's been going on for so long.

We all know the cost of building is increasing at an alarming rate and impacting the rate at which we can support the people and businesses. We face a lot of challenges in the construction industry to get shovels in the ground, so to speak, so I was going to ask the member for Cambridge how this project, or this specific bill, is going to help keep costs down from construction and removing potential cost barriers to people and businesses who are complying with public safety requirements?

Mr. Brian Riddell: Thank you for your question. It's kind of the same answer; it will just speed things up. Instead of having the gas guy, the electrical guy, the water guy and sewer guy come out to do a locate, one person can do it. And it will be a longer time period that that one call will be available for, and they can work together. So, really, it will speed things up. We need housing badly in Ontario. We all know that. And this is going to make a difference. It helps the process.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member for their debate this afternoon.

We've definitely heard some different thoughts and variations on what this bill will do. The title is Building Infrastructure Safety Act. I think there's a lot that could be done to ensure that infrastructure truly is built safer in this province, particularly dealing with Metrolinx and the CEO, who is currently making \$1 million and we're seeing trains go off the tracks with projects that he's doing, or projects being overrun.

Could the member comment on what we could do better, as the Building Infrastructure Safety Act states, to make sure that building is done safer, in a timely manner and is reflective of the people of Ontario's needs?

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'm not really addressing what the head of Metrolinx makes. What I'm talking about is the bill to get housing infrastructure built quicker. This is what it's all about; it's working together to push it along. If we could have one locate done instead of four or five, it's going to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Speaker, we know that access to skilled labour, rising material costs and many other challenges facing the construction sector are all well documented across the province. This greatly impacts the rate at which critical infrastructure projects get completed and therefore impacts the rate at which our government can support the people and businesses of Ontario as we work day in and day out to grow the size, strength and resilience of our economy.

Through you, Speaker, I would like to ask the member to please explain how this bill, if passed, is helping to keep costs down for construction projects and removing a potential cost barrier to people and businesses who are complying with public safety requirements in order to get their projects completed?

Mr. Brian Riddell: So safety in this bill is number one. There is nothing more important. Everybody that goes and works on these projects has to come home safe. That's the whole idea behind it. And having it better organized by having the one locate instead of four is going to do that. How it's going to do that is because everything will be done at the same time by the same person, which, again, will speed things up so we can get more shovels in the ground, get more homes built—skyscrapers.

A typical example: A company wants to build a skyscraper. They have to wait till all these locates are done if it's separate individuals. If one goes and does it, it's safe, it's effective and it's done in a shorter time.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Under this bill, there's two new sections: section 5.1 and section 7(9.1). Both of them talk about communication between the corporation and the locates. I'll read the last part of it:

"Subsection 5.1(5) requires the corporation to notify affected members if it receives an emergency, specified or

standard request.” And then, under the new section, “New subsection 7(9.1) requires the corporation to give notice to certain persons if it receives a dedicated locator request.”

I just want to ask the member: Why was that missed under Bill 93 and Bill 23 when you guys were working on locates?

Mr. Brian Riddell: The whole point of that is that some companies, like Enbridge, will have their own services that they’ll provide, and yet other companies will use other, individual outside services. Really, that’s what it’s about.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I very much thank and appreciate the member for Cambridge weighing in and making submissions on Bill 153. I wanted to ask him—he was elected on June 2, 2022 as the member for Cambridge and then, I think immediately thereafter, became the parliamentary assistant to this ministry. So he’s been there for almost a year and a half. Is he satisfied that we had extensive enough consultations with stakeholders leading up to these proposed amendments to the 2012 legislation?

Mr. Brian Riddell: I think the thing that really helped to satisfy my requirement was meeting at AMO last year in Ottawa and listening to northern communities talk about the delay they were having in getting locates done. When we told them that we’re going to be able to send out one guy that will do all the locates and it’s going to speed your process up, those stakeholders from those communities were very satisfied with that answer—and that filled my glass of coffee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): A quick question.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I must admit that, a couple of days ago, I didn’t even know what a locate was, so this is certainly a learning exercise for me.

What I do understand is the affordability of homes, and what was concerning to me was that Enbridge was actually looking to charge builders, including municipalities, for the cost of providing locates for this infrastructure. Can the member tell us why it is important that locates remain free?

Mr. Brian Riddell: The reason why the ministry wants to keep it free is to keep costs down, to make it that developers want to build and not have additional costs. Having five people and paying them \$200, \$300 each to come out and do a locate, or on maybe a larger site, might be thousands of dollars. Once that starts, it can escalate and cost that builder a lot of money and could deter him from wanting to actually do any more building.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It’s my pleasure to rise this evening on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean to speak to Bill 153, the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023.

This bill makes incremental updates to the Ontario One Call system. So to residents of Ottawa West–Nepean who aren’t aware of what the One Call system is and why it

matters, we have a lot of infrastructure that is contained underground, and if you dig and you strike some of this infrastructure, you could cause serious damage to the infrastructure—things like phone lines, waterlines, sewage lines, tile drains etc. But there is also underground infrastructure that you could cause serious harm to yourself or your neighbours if you strike this while digging, like electricity and gas lines. So it’s incredibly important to call or click to locate what the underground infrastructure is before you do any digging project in your backyard. It’s incredibly important that builders who are working on infrastructure projects do this.

I know that many people think that this is a good idea, but it’s actually more than a good idea. It’s mandatory that you reach out to the Ontario One Call system before you dig, and yet—I’m just going to share some statistics. These are from 2022, from a survey that was done earlier this year. In 2022, there were 4,769 reported instances of damages to buried infrastructure, an 8% increase from the previous year; 37% of those reported instances of damage were due to digging without locates—before people began the digging project—and 61% of those instances were on hazardous and dangerous infrastructure. So it’s incredibly important that people take this responsibility seriously and reach out, because these damages cost billions of dollars to repair, and they put people at risk. If you dig without reaching out first, you are subjected to potential fines and liable for any damages that are caused.

I’m going to share with residents of Ottawa West–Nepean, before I speak more about this bill, how you actually go about reaching out to Ontario One Call. There are a few simple steps that you need to follow. You need to follow them if you’re planting a tree, putting up a fence in your backyard, putting in a new garden, or any reason why you might need to dig.

The first step is to visit ontarioonecall.ca to learn more about how to request a locate. With a few simple clicks, request a locate at least five business days before you plan to dig. Wait for all buried infrastructure owners, like the gas, electric, Internet, water and sewer companies, to locate their infrastructure. Review paperwork provided by the buried infrastructure owners to make sure there are no conflicts with where you want to dig. Then, finally, dig safely.

Ontario One Call is a service provider that acts as a communications link between the underground infrastructure owners and the individuals who want to dig. It’s not Ontario One Call that owns the infrastructure or that actually comes out and does the locating, but they notify the infrastructure owners that you want to dig and ensure that you get a location service that happens for free. This is an idea that the NDP has long supported. In fact, it was the former NDP member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek who was a co-sponsor of the original bill that introduced this act to Ontario: the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, which we’ve heard some of the history about earlier this afternoon from the member for Sarnia–Lambton, and that established Ontario One Call as a single point of contact.

I believe that all parties in the Legislature support locates as a key part of building safely and that we all want to see any building projects done in the province of Ontario be done safely.

I'm glad to see this bill. I think it represents a good step, that the government is listening to excavators and infrastructure owners—that there are some concerns still with the existing system, and concerns about efficiencies and backlogs in the timeline.

This is the third time that the government is making changes to this legislation within the past two years. So I do wonder why some of these changes weren't incorporated into one of the previous bills. It does make me wonder how thoroughly the government was listening to the consultations which led to that previous legislation, if we still need to do more amending now.

In a nutshell, this bill amends the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act to define four different types of locate requests to which different rules and timelines will apply. The first category is a dedicated locator request, which will be made with respect to a broadband project. The second is an emergency request. I think it's pretty self-explanatory what an emergency request is. The third category is a specified request that meets prescribed criteria. It's not entirely clear right now what will fall into that category; we'll have to see once the regulations are laid out. The fourth category is a standard request, which is all other requests.

The legislation also allows Ontario One Call to independently set fees to members, subject to approval by the minister—so that's fees to members who are participating in Ontario One Call; that's not fees to Ontarians who are calling or going online to contact One Call. It also sets different time limits for specified requests. Currently, there's a five-day statutory time limit. This is going to allow for longer timelines for some types of requests and shorter timelines for others. I think we'll need to see what those timelines are eventually. It clarifies that the owner of the underground infrastructure shall not charge a fee for fulfilling a request, so the service will remain free to Ontarians. Finally, it removes the requirement for the owner of infrastructure to pay compensation if the timeline for the request is not met.

1720

I do have some concerns about how the government is going to hold the infrastructure owners accountable to residents of Ontario to ensure that builders are still getting timely responses and can move ahead to their projects if there's no requirement to pay compensation. This is an area where I certainly have some questions. We don't want to encourage people to skip the process or to think that they should just go ahead and start building before they get the answer if the process is taking too long to get an answer.

Other than this question about compensation, what we have in this legislation does seem to largely be good changes. As I mentioned, I do wonder why they're happening now, when they could have happened earlier, and I wonder if these issues weren't brought up by people

in the earlier consultations or if the government didn't fully listen to stakeholders during those earlier consultations.

But given that the government seems to be listening now to the building industry, to municipalities, to environmental partners and other stakeholders, I'd like to offer some more suggestions on what the government could do to build infrastructure safely in Ontario, because that seems to be their concern. The bill is titled the Building Infrastructure Safely Act. We do seem to have all-party support for building infrastructure safely in Ontario and we do have some concerns about safe infrastructure and how infrastructure is being built, so I would, in good faith, like to offer some suggestions to the government.

One thing that is incredibly important to do at the beginning of any infrastructure project is to properly consult and follow the process in place for planning before building, because we have a planning process for a reason.

I recently finished reading the book *How Big Things Get Done: The Surprising Factors that Determine the Fate of Every Project, from Home Renovations to Space Exploration and Everything in Between*, by Bent Flyvbjerg and Dan Gardner—Ottawa resident Dan Gardner. It was an Ottawa resident—a constituent—who recommended that I read this book. I greatly enjoyed it and learned a lot, and I would love to buy copies for all of the staff in the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing because I think there are a great deal of important lessons in that book that we would all benefit from, if the Ontario government followed these lessons and learned from them. I think that the Ottawa LRT is going to be an example of how not to do things in the second edition of the book, because it was pretty much the opposite of everything recommended in the book.

But there are some important lessons that we can learn. One of the things that the book talks about is the importance of spending your time on the planning process, rather than rushing the planning process to get to the building process. You want to spend more time in planning and then, once you move to building, have addressed all possible concerns so that you can move quickly in the building. That's the part where you move quickly, having spent your time in the planning process, identifying possible challenges and concerns and cost escalators.

But what we see with this government time and time again is actually the exact opposite. In fact, a particularly egregious example earlier this year was when the ministry skirted its own rules on processing and rushed a minister's zoning order to give a developer the right to build a 50-storey skyscraper in Mississauga that, it turned out, was right in the flight path of Pearson airport.

I'm just going to read some excerpts from this Global News story about what happened:

“The Ford government was forced to scale back a minister's zoning order after the developer was given permission to build a skyscraper right in the middle of the flight path of Pearson International Airport ... after a rushed process.

“Months after it was issued, the zoning order was quietly amended when airport officials told the government it couldn’t allow a 50-storey tower to be built on a flight path utilized by hundreds of aircraft.

“The gaffe is likely to draw more scrutiny to the province’s use of minister’s zoning orders, or MZOs, a controversial tool that allows the province to overrule and replace planning decisions made by local councils.

“In May, the province surprised bureaucrats and local politicians at Mississauga city hall when it issued two zoning orders to skip local planning rules on several buildings in the city.

“The announcement blindsided local officials, who were not expecting the MZOs ... local sources in Mississauga told Global News the move was a surprise and bureaucrats found out about the planning changes at the same time as everyone else—when the press release landed....

“Sources with knowledge of the provincial process told Global News the request for one building included in the zoning order—a 50-storey tower—came from the developer and was turned around by the Ford government in less than two weeks.

“The order to allow the building near Toronto Pearson came through the Premier’s office and was given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the sources said....

“After the zoning order was announced, and city staff left scrambling to put the planning direction into action, officials at Toronto Pearson airport were forced to intervene.

“Staff with the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, the group in charge of Pearson, contacted the province to explain the building was in an area used as an emergency flight path and that its height could impact their operations, sources told Global News.”

So this is a perfect example of how failing to take adequate time to plan, failing to follow the process, directly impacted the safety of infrastructure. It’s incredibly important that we follow safe processes when planning infrastructure, and yet under this government, we’ve seen more MZOs issued to guests at a Ford family wedding than were issued under the entirety of the previous Liberal administration. If you are forcing through these MZOs, skipping environmental assessments, you’re just not going to be taking the time you need to actually ensure that infrastructure is being built safely in the province of Ontario.

Of course, Speaker, I’m the education critic for the Ontario NDP, and there are so many issues with safe infrastructure in the area of education. We know that we have a school repair backlog that exceeds \$16.8 billion. We don’t actually know how great the repair backlog is because the government stopped doing inspections for three years. They stopped in 2020. We’ve learned recently that they only just resumed this summer, so we don’t know exactly how big the repair backlog is. We do know that committing only \$1.4 billion per year to address both building new schools and addressing a \$16.8-billion repair

backlog is not actually going to make the backlog smaller. The backlog is going to keep expanding.

But in the meantime, our kids are being sent every single day in the province of Ontario to school buildings that are unsafe: buildings with windows that don’t open; buildings that don’t have proper ventilation; buildings that have mould; buildings that have crumbling walls; buildings that have water pipes that aren’t safe and shouldn’t be used anymore. We have children that are in portables that have mould issues, that are rotting. We know that, in general, children don’t have the same learning outcomes when they’re in portables as when they are in school buildings, and that’s when the portables are in good shape.

So it’s incredibly important that we address the safety of our school infrastructure, and that includes addressing the quality of ventilation in schools. The government did make investments into ventilation upgrades during the pandemic, but they’ve refused to set in place any kind of measurements, any kind of reporting, any kind of standards that our school buildings need to meet, and so we have literally no idea what the conditions are like in our schools in Ontario.

We do know that in provinces where they have been tracking and reporting this, there is reason to be concerned. In Quebec, where all classrooms now have a CO₂ monitor installed, last December, one third of all school classrooms in the province of Quebec exceeded the safe level of carbon dioxide parts per million. Carbon dioxide, when it exceeds the safe level, can cause a significant number of physical health issues, in addition to impacting the cognitive abilities of children.

CO₂ is also a proxy for how the ventilation system is doing overall. It tells us what the rate of return is on the ventilation system. We know when CO₂ levels are really high that the ventilation system is not turning over the air as frequently as it should. When the ventilation isn’t working the way it should, we know that respiratory viruses are more likely to be circulating, that we’re not taking pollution and other particulate matter out of the air, so we are putting the safety of our children, teachers and education workers at risk.

We also know that investing in better air quality can actually help our children’s learning outcomes. Lower CO₂ levels have been correlated with better outcomes on test scores and fewer absences for both teachers, education workers and students. So there are many reasons why we should be improving the air quality in our schools.

And just because we made ventilation upgrades doesn’t mean that we can just assume everything is fine. Because in California, a pre-pandemic study of HVAC systems that had been installed in classrooms there found that 85% of recently installed HVAC systems weren’t meeting good air quality standards, either because they weren’t installed properly, because they weren’t being repaired properly, or because they weren’t being maintained and used properly. Simply having the equipment in our schools is not good enough to ensure that we actually have safe infrastructure for our children. We actually need to do the testing and monitoring and set quality standards to make sure that our

children, teachers and education workers have safe infrastructure.

1730

Speaking of safe infrastructure, I have to talk about provincial and demonstration schools in Ontario. These schools, unfortunately, are in incredibly unsafe conditions, yet some of our most vulnerable children in the province of Ontario who attend these schools—these are children with profound disabilities, children who often have multiple disabilities and learning exceptionalities. Many of them have to live away from home in order to receive an education, and yet, unfortunately, they're being put in conditions that are completely unsafe and that are not supporting their learning.

At the W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind in Brantford, they are in desperate need of school repairs in order to provide a safe education to students. They've had chronic heating problems in the winter because the boilers continue to fail year after year.

The Robarts School for the Deaf also had a problem with the boiler breaking, and it wasn't fixed for a month. Children who are deaf need to communicate with their fingers, but these children were being kept in a freezing cold classroom, where they had to wear their coats and mittens, which meant that it was incredibly difficult for them to communicate.

We've also had a pool where deaf students were able to learn how to swim safely. It's incredibly difficult for children who are deaf to receive swimming lessons in ASL, but they deserve water safety no less than other students in the province of Ontario, and yet the pool was not fixed despite the fact that these students had no access.

Another provincial school had exterior structural issues with bricks and stones falling down, endangering the students, parents and staff who were entering the building. It took multiple protests, bringing media out, raising substantial safety concerns, before the ministry finally installed scaffolding.

So there's a lot of work to be done to address safe infrastructure for our students in the province of Ontario.

If I had another 20 minutes, I could speak just for 20 minutes about the need to address transit safety. Building the Ottawa transit system with wheels that don't match the gauge of the track, leading to train derailments, with wheels that aren't round, is setting Ottawa residents at risk. It's setting the workers who have to operate and maintain the LRT system at risk. It really reveals the ways in which public-private partnerships are compromising the safety of our public infrastructure in Ontario. It has certainly compromised the ability of anybody in Ottawa or the province of Ontario to hold anyone responsible and accountable for what happened with this multi-billion dollar project that has resulted in a transit system that doesn't work. So I think avoiding public-private partnerships is another element of ensuring that we are building infrastructure safely, ensuring that we have infrastructure that does what people expect—and that workers can be sure will be a safe working environment when they go to work every day.

I will leave it there, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa West–Nepean for her remarks this afternoon.

Speaker, I know I am grateful for the essential service that Ontario One Call provides—obviously, as the member alluded to in some of her remarks, it identifies underground infrastructure as a critical safety measure for that construction. The industry is a key contributor to our province's economic growth. I know that those of us on this side know that there's unanimous support for faster locates while ensuring the public remain safe and that damage to underground infrastructure remains minimized.

The bill looks to streamline the pre-construction processes and wait times for necessary projects like affordable housing and schools, as the member referred to in her remarks.

I was wondering if the member from Ottawa West–Nepean is going to be supporting this bill since it will get schools built faster.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Perth–Wellington for that answer. If the member for Perth–Wellington had been listening to my remarks, the member for Perth–Wellington would have heard me say that the most important thing is not the speed with which we build the infrastructure but the safety. We do need to see the government invest significantly more into capital funding to build new schools in the province of Ontario and to provide school repair backlogs.

That doesn't mean we should be rushing these projects. The funding should be there; the community consultation also needs to be there to ensure that these projects are done safely. And, yes, when the building is ready to happen, we want those locates to happen quickly and efficiently without any fees charged to the school board.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je ne sais pas s'il est trop tard pour une question en français—mieux que je la pose en anglais.

I was listening to you intently and I thank you for your presentation. You talked about, number one, the locates for broadband. You know I come from a northern riding, and I represent First Nations that are isolated. When I look at a bill like this, Bill 153, I see this works for the south, works for communities that are very accessible, but I don't see this bringing broadband fast to my communities of First Nations that live on the James Bay coast—when you're a five-hour train ride to get to Moosonee, not to mention the ones that don't even have road access. Do you see this bringing broadband faster to First Nations on the James Bay coast?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to answer in English after a very long workday.

The member is absolutely correct: We know that broadband is incredibly important for connection within our modern society. We know that, within our school

system, digital access has become an increasingly important component. And the more remote your community is, actually, the more important broadband is, because the more important digital connection becomes. And, yet, simply addressing digging safely does nothing whatsoever to bring broadband to many rural and remote communities across the province.

We really need to make sure that the public support is there for projects of bringing broadband access as quickly and effectively as we can to these communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for your presentation today. We're both from Ottawa—a great city. One of the most dangerous pieces of infrastructure in the city of Ottawa is Highway 174. One of the most dangerous pieces of infrastructure in the counties of Glengarry and Prescott and Russell is Highway 17. They're the same highway.

I'm wondering if you believe, in order to enhance the safety of that highway, which is also known as the "killer strip," that Highway 174 and Highway 17 should be uploaded to the province of Ontario so that we can get the safety enhancements and improvements that it so desperately needs?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member from Orléans for the question. I'm pleased to see the member from Orléans made it here today, since we both had some travel difficulties here last night. It was kind of a safety issue in the end.

I think we need to look at questions of downloading and uploading, because certainly I don't think that the downloading of all kinds of transportation infrastructure to the municipalities made Ontarians safe, particularly when the government is at the same time taking many revenue sources out of the municipalities' hands or making it more difficult for municipalities to collect revenue and spend it on things that will make life better for their residents.

In addition to addressing the issue of highway safety, we also have to address the question of why so many people are on our highways in Ontario, which really has to do with the lack of reasonable and affordable alternatives in Ontario. We should also be looking at what we can do to support making rail service more effective and efficient and affordable in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: The member for Ottawa West—Nepean, in her remarks, included a reference to the Robarts School for the Deaf in London, Ontario. That, I state for the record, was named after the late Honourable John Robarts, Premier of Ontario from 1961 to 1971. The school was opened in 1973. He was the Premier—or, as we called him then, the Prime Minister—who presided over a government that introduced the first Consumer Protection Act.

1740

Since the member opposite voted in favour of that act—the 2023 version—on second reading, will the member, noting the very positive aspects of this bill, the Building

Infrastructure Safety Act, also be following suit on that and supporting the bill?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the minister for the history lesson. I did know about the source of the name of the Robarts school. I actually grew up in the London area, so that was something I was familiar with. I did not know, however, the connection between Robarts and the Consumer Protection Act. The students who are at the Robarts school aren't, strictly speaking, consumers, but I do think nonetheless that they deserve a significant amount of protection that they're not receiving from the government right now.

The minister would know that these provincial schools are actually the only schools in Ontario that don't fall under the jurisdiction of a school board. They're directly controlled by the ministry, so there is nothing that would stop the ministry from making investments today that would make these schools safe for students. I hope that, because the minister is such a strong proponent of protections for Ontarians, that he would advocate within cabinet that those investments be made to protect kids at the Robarts school.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch to the member from Ottawa West—Nepean. They are building a mirror factory in my home community, my home First Nation. I'm kind of happy about that because I could see myself working there. In all seriousness, Kingfisher is actually 450 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay. There are 24 fly-in First Nations in the north. I know to be able to access them, to be able to do that location, somebody will have to pay for the cost of the charter, the cost of the flight. Who do you think should pay for that?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Kiiwetinoong for that question. It's certainly why it's so important that we have consultations before developing any legislation, when, as you say, the reality on the ground in your riding is so different than in other parts of the province. We can't adopt one-size-fits-all legislation in Toronto and assume that it's going to work for members living in other parts of the province, such as in Kiiwetinoong. We have to be listening to the people of Kiiwetinoong as to what their needs are and making sure legislation addresses that.

The answer, to be brief, is that it should not be the people of Kiiwetinoong who are paying for that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): A quick question.

Ms. Laura Smith: These plans will bring forward streamlines to locate, a delivery process that cuts down on the number of times locates need to be repeated. They're intended to cut costs and keep construction sites going. It's part of our plan to get vital infrastructure like transit, like roads, like schools done in a public safety manner. I'm asking the member opposite why she feels uncomfortable with the idea of cutting red tape in the locate process.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Thornhill for the question.

I am not at all uncomfortable with the idea of streamlining processes. What I'm concerned about with this legislation is letting owners of infrastructure off the hook for meeting timelines, which could mean that people then start digging without getting the answer. I think that's not an efficiency. It's putting people—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Further debate?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm honoured to be sharing my time with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

It is an honour for me to rise and talk to Bill 153. As I've said many times—I just said it last week in the House—so many things to a legislator become important in their journey. For me, as I've said—and I'm honoured to be having the role of Solicitor General—public safety is important.

Madame la Présidente, comme je l'ai déjà dit, rien pour moi, en tant que solliciteur général, n'est plus important que la sécurité de notre province.

I also said, Madam Speaker, that in addition to public safety being so important, we have to believe in the future of our province. Together, we will build Ontario. Madame la Présidente, ensemble, nous bâtissons l'Ontario.

This is something that we all need to do. As simplistic as Bill 153 is, it is about understanding that in order to build Ontario, we have to have the infrastructure in place in regulation and legislation that allows us to do this safely. I've listened to my colleagues and friends opposite who come from different places in Ontario—some the furthest north as possible, like the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay. I have a lot of respect for how big our province is, because we're honoured to have you and our other colleagues from places in the very Far North who come here every week to help build the best Ontario we can.

This bill, if passed, will make it much easier to locate underground infrastructure such as gas, electric, water, sewer lines and other utility infrastructures. We know why, Madam Speaker: because the locates need to be done before construction begins for a new home, or transportation like a subway, or high-speed Internet cabling. The proposed bill would prohibit—I think as the minister said in his remarks—the underground infrastructure owners from charging fees for locates, stemming the possibility of a spiralling cycle of costs that would delay the construction and increase expenses to the project, and be very unfair. I think this is what's important as well.

So our government is very proudly proposing the Building Infrastructure Safety Act, 2023. This is something that, as we discuss it from all sides of the aisle, we realize that when we go around our province and we see cranes everywhere, and we see digging being done, and we see the prospects of helping build Ontario—for our party, it's setting so many goals that are important. It's not only about building the hospitals and the subway lines, it's those 1.5 million homes, if not more, that need to be built because people need to live. We have unprecedented

amounts of people coming into our province, whether it's 8,000, 9,000 or 10,000 people a week—maybe more—and they need a place to live.

When we're asking people to build, they have to do so safely. The underground infrastructure can reduce the risk of accidents—and we know this—caused by overhead powerlines or other exposed utilities. We know the scenarios that before my friend, colleague and parliamentary assistant the member from Sarnia–Lambton, who saw this need 10 years ago, if not more, and made it a priority to bring forward a private member's bill that I'm told had the support of the then government of the day—the member was right. It seems so obvious.

After I graduated university and proceeded in the early 1990s to learn about construction—I spent some time in it and I helped my family do different projects. For us, it wasn't trivial, what can go wrong if you don't call for a locate. In fact, we've heard horror stories of what can go wrong. When the member from Sarnia–Lambton was able to bring forward this need for locates, it brought to the forefront something that was inherently—many people thought it already existed, but it didn't.

To coordinate public safety is irreplaceable; to make sure that whether we're talking about public safety—public safety includes safety. It includes the simplistic items of calling before you dig. Because many of us, when we buy a property or decide to build a home or to see other people do it or, as the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay said, when they have to put in infrastructure, we have to know what's there.

1750

I can't believe how simplistic the concept of calling before you dig is. That's important, but the idea that people could have to pay a charge that should not be borne by a property owner or somebody doing a renovation because they might not know what's under the ground—it seems to be very, very simple.

Buried infrastructure tends to have a longer lifespan, and we know this, as it is protected from environmental elements. The longevity and the durability are also important because, in many cases, it reduces the need for further maintenance because we buried it underground.

Today's technology has come a long way. I read up, after the minister introduced the bill, actually, on the technology that exists to identify and locate underground services, and I was surprised at how far the technology has come, which again goes back to the simplicity of being patient, calling before you dig and ensuring you know what's under the ground. Really, even in my own riding of York Centre, which is a mature riding whose homes were built originally starting in the 1950s right up to the present, we have an unprecedented amount of condominiums and other multi-residential developments being built.

The proposed bill—and this is, again, the second point—would prohibit infrastructure owners from being charged a fee for their locates. This is very, very important. I think, at the end of the day—and I'll end my thoughts where I started because I want to share my time with my colleague our respected minister—the changes are de-

signed to help build Ontario. The changes in this bill are designed to make sure that people don't get a bill for doing the right thing by calling. I think, at the end of the day, if we want to build Ontario, if we want to see Ontario being built, and we all do, then this is a very simple way to do it.

I want to commend the minister for doing something that, to be quite honest, many of my constituents thought already existed. Thanks to him and his office, they wanted to make it absolutely clear for everyone to know. I want to just say to my colleague that it raises awareness. It gives us another reminder, as my great friend from Sarnia-Lambton brought to our attention 10 years ago, how important this is.

Madam Speaker, it's an honour to stand here. It's an honour to be optimistic about the future of Ontario. It's an honour to be with all of my colleagues in this Legislature who share optimism for our families, for our children, for their families and, one day, their children and for anybody who comes and calls Ontario home. We are a province that is absolutely irreplaceable, and it's an honour to rise to speak today on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased to join the debate today and add my voice to a very important piece of legislation that has been a long time in the making. But before I go into it, I really appreciate the opportunity to participate in debate because you learn things. First and foremost, to the member from Oshawa, congratulations on getting married. I didn't realize that. I think that's awesome. A while back I had the opportunity of meeting her partner, now husband. I just want to wish them every happiness.

To the member from Cambridge, I really appreciate the fact that he reflected on his lived experience of actually seeing a house blow up because of someone hitting natural gas. That had to be a permanent impression that really lends itself to why this legislation is so important.

To the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, I thank you so very much for all you're doing. I know your team, Michelle and Erika and your officials and everyone else over in your office, have worked so incredibly hard to bring this to the finish line because we need it in Ontario.

Ladies and gentlemen, for those of you who are just tuning in, we're debating today Bill 153, An Act to amend the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012. In doing so, if this piece of legislation is supported, Ontario will be the only jurisdiction with a legislated one call to dig regime. Congratulations, Minister. It's very much needed.

To those of you watching, what does that mean? It means that all underground infrastructure owners and operators must become members of Ontario One Call and provide underground infrastructure location information in a timely manner, not only to assist vital construction and development, but, more importantly, to ensure the public safety and reliance on critical infrastructure. That is so important and why we are very much looking to build on

the success from 2012, and that's where I want to touch on the member from Sarnia-Lambton at this time.

I think it's important to recognize that that particular member has had the greatest number of successful PMBs in my time here, and I think in the history of the House. There's no two ways about it. And it's because he brings his lived experience, it's because he brings his heart to PMBs that really could make a difference for all of Ontario. I want to thank him, as well, for paving the way to make sure that we have a thoughtful manner in which we can move forward with confidence when it comes to digging and understanding what truly is underground.

We've been sharing a lot of reflections on urban municipalities and what it means. I represent Huron-Bruce, very much a rural riding. Our ditches are getting full and it's important that we have an opportunity to have one place to make one phone call to make sure that the infrastructure remains safe and we realize opportunities to have efficiencies, as well as safety, as well as a productive manner in which we can move forward with construction and/or the laying down of broadband and/or the laying down of natural gas.

I want to touch on the member from Sarnia-Lambton. In 2008, it wasn't lost on anyone that a Niagara Falls homeowner was killed following an explosion caused by a landscaping company which accidentally punctured an underground gas line. That is why, in 2012, my colleague, the member from Sarnia-Lambton, recognized the need to address this important issue to protect public safety and reduce wasteful costs to utility customers and municipal taxpayers alike.

It was in April 2011, just a few months before I was elected to this House, that the member of Sarnia-Lambton introduced Bill 180, the Ontario One Call Act. While Bill 180 passed second reading with unanimous support from all parties, unfortunately it died on the order paper when the 2011 election was called. But I'm really pleased to say that the member from Sarnia-Lambton knows how to work across the aisle, and it was later that year that he partnered with the former member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek to reintroduce the bill as Bill 8, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act.

Bill 8 was introduced in November 2011 and, by June 2012, it had passed third reading and received royal assent. The act established Ontario One Ltd., a not-for-profit, mandatory, single point of contact for all utility locations and services in Ontario. The act streamlined the process of locating underground utilities and mandated that all owners of underground infrastructure and municipalities to register as members with Ontario One Call. But, again, that was on a voluntary basis, and it's interesting to note that.

As we look ahead to just think about how people have embraced this particular entity and the importance of understanding what's underground before they dig, I want to give a shout-out because I have some stats here that I just need to pull up in terms of the number of municipalities, as well as the number of calls. One Call actually receives over a million calls a year in terms of locating particular underground infrastructure. That is just out-

standing, and it shows that this particular initiative is working. As of March 2023, Ontario One Call has 847 members and approximately 372 municipal members.

1800

What I really appreciate about the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery is that—you know what? To be successful from one end of this province to another, it needs to be absolutely moved forward with a legislated one call to dig regime. I think it's a smart way to go about things, because locates are essential. It doesn't matter whether you're in urban Ontario or rural Ontario; locates are essential to construction across the province and need to be done before construction begins for a new home, a barn, subway line or high-speed Internet cabling.

If passed, this bill would prohibit underground infrastructure owners from charging fees for locates, stemming the possibility of a spiralling cycle of costs that would delay construction and increase expenses to projects. I applaud the minister for taking that move. It's bold but necessary, because making sure that we're digging safely should not be at the cost of people trying to build new houses and trying to move our province forward as we build Ontario together. So good job on that.

Another thing I want to make note of is that this minister was absolutely dedicated to consultations. Over the summer, the ministry, the officials and his team at the public and business service delivery ministry worked hard to make sure voices across this province were heard. Consultation is paramount if we're going to get legislation right, and because of the commitment to consultations and the success that he realized, I think we have a really strong piece of legislation, which I'm very proud to stand in this House and add my voice to in debate.

The free-of-charge locates should be consistent with a long-standing industry practice across North America, because, again, at the end of the day, increased public safety and minimizing the damage to critical infrastructure are paramount.

To better align Ontario One Call's powers and responsibilities with other administrative authorities in key areas, we need to be taking a look at including protections for statutory officials, One Call officers and directors, employees and agents from personal liability, and we need to allow One Call to make bylaw changes to implement ministers' orders without requiring members' approval. That's just smart, and that's efficient, and it's getting government out of the way of doing business.

The government of the day that I so proudly belong to in terms of an effective team also plans to bring forward regulations to help streamline the locate delivery processes that would cut down on the number of times locates need to be repeated. Again, it's all about efficiencies.

Speaker, these proposed changes were made with stakeholder feedback, as I alluded to earlier, with the number of consultations that were facilitated over the summer. I congratulate the minister for the amazing work that he has given to this particular task of bringing Bill 153 forward.

Our government will continue to consult with stakeholders on the proposed legislative changes, and our

government will continue to build Ontario. We are ensuring that we are protecting the public from accidents caused when underground infrastructure is damaged, and we want to keep costs down as well for construction projects while ensuring this vital infrastructure is protected.

Before I end, I just want to commend again the member from Sarnia–Lambton. Congratulations for laying down the foundation for which the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery is bringing forward such a thoughtful piece of legislation.

I think we should all be supporting Bill 153.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions, please.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is to the member from York Centre. I'm hoping you can clarify some issues for me. I see that Ontario One Call will be allowed to charge fees, but how will they be determined? Who's paying them and for what? On the one hand, the infrastructure companies won't be charging for certain requests, but Ontario One Call could be charging for requests. So I'm wondering about that.

I'm also wondering about the accountability mechanisms that need to be there if timelines don't have to be met. Self-regulation fails people time and time again. I imagine that perhaps I'm not seeing where the regulatory mechanisms are in the bill. So I'm hoping that you can explain those two points for me.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: My understanding is that there are no locate fees. My understanding is that this is what we talked about in Bill 153—that we want to move past it, that we don't want any fees. We don't want the burdensome fees being charged—or other utility providers, as example, from charging a fee. This is exactly what Bill 153 does. It makes sure that can't happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: I appreciate both members providing such an informative piece on this bill because this is important. We have to build Ontario. We can't do that if we can't do it quickly and expeditiously and in a safe manner.

If this is passed, it will have a major impact that would be felt in communities all across Ontario. Wherever you look, locate services providers are needed.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Can either member please tell us the full impact that this legislation will have on Ontarians and the major benefits that it will provide?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand in the House and respond to the question asked, because I think it's really important that we recognize the absolute benefits that you alluded to.

First and foremost, Ontario is going to lead by example, for the rest of Canada to follow, when it comes to making sure that we have a legislated one call to dig regime, where everyone is going to be responsible to be a member of Ontario One Call. This is very important because if we're going to have consistency and we're going to have confidence in a program that will be relied upon across the province, we need to make sure that what we've laid out in this legislation is followed through upon.

The other thing I want to make sure that people realize is that—early on in some of the discussion that we heard earlier today, I heard the word “safety,” I heard the word “efficiency,” I heard the phrase “protection of infrastructure underground” coming from the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery. And that, at the end of the day, is what Ontarians can count on in terms of benefits from Bill 153.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened closely to the presentation from the Solicitor General and from the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

We are certainly in favour of the principle behind One Call, but what we ran into in northern Ontario in the last year is, we make the call, but nobody shows up. And then, they call the MPP’s office. And then, we call again and no one shows up. And then, we call the actual companies that supply the services. In some cases, it takes not days, not weeks, but months.

I want to know, what’s in this bill—and I’m hoping it’s there—to make sure that when someone is relying on the locate for their project, there is actually someone who’s going to show up? I can give you the cases in my office where we have had to intervene—and that is within the last year.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much to the member opposite for raising that point in this House.

Back in the day, when I had consultations about One Call as well, I heard similar situations, whereby projects were held up because that locate just didn’t happen in a timely fashion.

I have every confidence in the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery that he’s going to make sure that as Bill 153 becomes law, with the legislated one call to dig regime, we will have the highest standards in Canada, and that issue, I have every confidence, will be addressed at that time.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Speaker, I wanted to point out to the House the mentions that were made for the member from Sarnia–Lambton for bringing forth this bill so many years ago and the efforts to make that happen. I actually have a little bit of connection to that particular story, because shortly after that, the ministry brought it to the AMO conference, and they were looking for municipal leaders to come and speak to it and what a difference it would make for their municipalities. I happened to be a deputy mayor at the time; I was asked to come out and speak to that at the AMO conference. I was always very pleased that this made it possible for municipalities to have that consistent process for safety.

Again, I speak to how this province, this government, has been focused on building more homes. Municipalities need tools like this to continue building homes in a consistent and safe fashion.

So I would ask the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs how she feels about the small municipalities

and their ability to make sure that things get done on a consistent basis.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much for that question. Again, I wanted to find that one page. We have a sizable number of municipalities that voluntarily became members of One Call, and I appreciate that very much. But as we look forward, there were approximately, as of March 2023, 372 municipal members. I think we need to have a number of municipalities realize the value of this particular piece of legislation, and that we have all 444 municipalities sign on to One Call, because at the end of the day, we are demonstrating that we’ve listened. We’re demonstrating that we’re working hard to make sure that there are efficiencies, because safety is paramount, so that we can move forward and build homes throughout this province in all 444 municipalities. We know we need them—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister, for that response.

We’re on questions.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: As we’ve been saying here, we agree that this is an important bill to keep people safe, to keep our infrastructure safe, to keep workers safe, but it has triggered a question that I have about the government’s own infrastructure and their responsibilities for other things that are underground.

As you will know, in Ontario, we have approximately 24,000 abandoned oil and gas wells, and we also have about, I think, 7,000 that pose an imminent risk to human life and property. So my question is, are you looking at ways in which you can make sure government infrastructure, things that are in your responsibility that are underground, that have caused significant impacts like we saw in the town of Wheatley, an explosion—are you taking steps? Are you considering what your government can do to make sure that people know what’s underground when it comes to oil and gas wells?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: One Call has the authority to do its job. The member opposite brings up a valid point. That’s why we need to call before we dig. I’m hoping that when we streamline it—and now that the member is here behind me, our great friend from Sarnia–Lambton, who was a forerunner, a pioneer, he says at least 12 years ago—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Not a pioneer.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: At least in bringing this idea forward, at least getting the government of the day to say, “We need to do something about it.” So I want to say to my friend from Sarnia–Lambton, thank you.

Here we are in 2023, creatively, innovatively working forward to bring forward a piece of legislation. I know that this is a step in the right direction, and I feel very confident, through the minister’s leadership, that lives will be saved, as the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas said, and other things will be much easier for construction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Further debate?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Avant de commencer, je veux remercier les traducteurs parce que, je le sais, je ne leur

rends pas la vie tout le temps facile. L'autre jour, je sortais de l'élévateur et j'ai rencontré un traducteur. Il m'a parlé en français, et j'ai dit : « Oh, tu parles français. C'est quoi que tu fais? » Il m'a dit qu'il était traducteur pour Hansard. J'ai dit : « Je ne vous donne pas trop de misère? Des fois, j'use des termes plus franco-ontariens, ou que ça vient de ma culture. » Puis, il a dit non. Il a dit : « On a trouvé un mot qu'on n'avait pas utilisé depuis 1900—quelque chose. » Je ne me souviens pas si c'était toi.

Anyway, j'ai trouvé ça extrêmement drôle que j'avais utilisé un mot que ça faisait longtemps qu'on ne l'avait pas entendu, mais pour moi, c'est un mot qu'on utilise souvent.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: C'est quoi le mot?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je ne me souviens même plus; c'est rien pour vous dire.

Mais, je veux dire merci, parce qu'ils font un travail exemplaire. Ce n'est pas tout le temps facile. Il y a des fois, on se laisse emporter et on parle très vite. Je suis une personne qui parle vite quand j'embarque mes émotions. Je veux vous dire merci, parce que ce n'est pas un travail facile quand tu fais de la traduction simultanée.

Ceci dit, écoute, ça me fait toujours plaisir de me lever en Chambre, pour parler du projet de loi 153, Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023, puis représenter les personnes de mon comté de Mushkegowuk—Baie James.

Je regarde le projet de loi. Ça parle des infrastructures, puis d'appeler avant de creuser, comme on dit, parce qu'on sait que ça peut être très dangereux avec le gaz naturel, avec l'électricité, et avec toutes autres infrastructures qui peuvent être souterraines.

Souvent, je me rends compte que les projets de loi que le gouvernement amène, c'est que très souvent ils sont adaptés pour des gros développements qu'ils vont avoir dans le Sud ou dans des villes, les plus grandes villes—puis aussi les villes du Nord, là. Il y a des villes du Nord où ça s'applique assez bien. Il faut le reconnaître. Mais très souvent, par exemple, quand on va plus vers le Grand Nord, ça ne s'adonne pas tout le temps. Je pense que mon collègue, il en a parlé et a dit—on ne le réalise pas, mais il y a une question que mon collègue de Kiiwetinoong a demandée, et je trouvais ça très intéressant. Il a dit : « Qui va payer pour l'avion pour se rendre à Kiiwetinoong? » Parce qu'il y a de l'équipement qui va être amené. Il va y avoir tout ça qui vient, mais vous ne vous donnez rien qu'un prix pour que ça se représente. Pour moi, quand je vais rencontrer une de mes communautés, j'ai eu des cotations jusqu'à 15 000 \$ juste pour aller dans une communauté. J'en ai vu des beaucoup plus salées que ça, où j'ai refusé d'aller parce que c'était beaucoup plus que 15 000 \$. C'était même plus proche de 25 000 \$. J'ai dit que c'est injustifiable, parce que je dois payer 15 000 \$ pour aller dans plusieurs communautés dans une semaine, puis d'aller juste dans une communauté pour ça—imagine-toi. C'est une facture assez salée, là. Qui va payer pour ça?

Je veux vous en parler un petit peu plus, parce que j'ai eu ces problèmes-là, et je pense aussi que mon collègue a posé une très bonne question quand il a demandé au

gouvernement—Call One. Je le sais. Je l'ai vécu, moi, aussi, le même scénario que ce qu'il a posé. On l'a appelé, Call One, parce qu'on avait des plaintes, des complaints. Il y a bien de nous, de mes commettants, qui appelaient avec des plaintes—comme quoi? Ils ont dit : « Bien, écoute, on l'a fait, mais la date est passée. On n'est pas capable de construire. » Puis, on parle de six mois à un an, là. Il y a eu des projets qui ont été remis et repoussés. Il y a une école qui a été obligée de repousser sa construction. Ils ont perdu leur contracteur parce qu'ils n'étaient pas capable d'avoir la « locate »—leur location, si tu aimes mieux, en français, là—pour trouver où est-ce qu'ils étaient. Fait que, on a fait des appels. On a attendu. On a appelé.

J'ai été obligé d'appeler Enbridge moi-même, puis dire—ce n'était pas juste pour une situation, là. J'ai parlé du contrat de l'école. Il y avait d'autres projets d'été qui ont été remis. Il y avait des puits. J'ai un de mes amis qui m'a appelé et a dit : « Guy, ça ne fait aucun sens, là. » Il a dit : « On a du monde qui attend pour »—lui, son garçon a une compagnie pour creuser des puits, puis il est partenaire avec son garçon. Il a dit : « Ça n'a plus de sens. On n'est plus capable. On est assez backlogué avec nos puits, parce qu'on attend toujours après les “locates.” » Il faut trouver des locations. Il a dit : « Ça n'a aucun sens. » Ce monde-là, il va venir un temps où ils ne seront pas capables de creuser des puits. Il faut se souvenir que nos hivers sont assez froids.

J'ai fait un appel. J'ai appelé Enbridge. Enbridge a dit : « Bien, écoute, on va vérifier ce qui se passe. » Ça a pris plus qu'un appel. On a eu un appel, on a eu des rencontres Zoom et on a eu des rencontres avec Enbridge pour expliquer la situation. J'ai appelé la ville. La ville aussi avait des problèmes. J'ai dit : « Écoute, avez-vous eu des résultats? » Il n'y avait pas de résultats. Mais ça a pris plusieurs appels. Ça ne s'est pas fait juste de même, là.

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Mais la réalité, c'est qu'il y a des contrats qui ont été perdus, ou qui ont été repoussés, je devrais dire, le projet, à un an, parce que ça ne marchait plus. C'est pour vous dire que c'est pour ça que, quand j'ai entendu la question qui a été posée par mon collègue de Timiskaming, et elle a dit, « Ah! j'ai confiance en le ministre »—j'ai bien confiance en le ministre, mais quand on n'a pas les résultats dont on a besoin, le ministre ne sera pas là. Ce n'est pas le ministre qui va être là. Les contrats, ils vont se perdre. Ça, ça veut dire que, encore, on va être dans la même situation.

Mais ce serait injuste de moi—je vais prendre une gorgée d'eau parce que j'ai la gorge sèche. Ce serait injuste de moi de dire que la situation ne s'est pas améliorée. Elle s'est améliorée, mais, là, on parle d'une période de près d'un an. Ça a pris beaucoup d'appels. Ça a pris beaucoup de choses pour que ça change.

D'avoir une réponse comme elle a dit—parce que ça peut se produire, là. Je trouve que ce gouvernement est déconnecté des régions du Nord, des régions éloignées, des régions—vous êtes déconnectés. On vit ça souvent, nous, que—comme ils disent, « one size fits all ». Des fois,

ça ne s'applique pas tout le temps dans le Nord, mais vous semblez oublier ça souvent. C'est pour ça que la question de mon collègue de Timiskaming qu'il a demandée à la ministre—c'est une des ministres qui a répondu et elle a dit : « J'ai complètement confiance en l'autre ministre. » Bien, écoute, c'est correct, là, que vous avez confiance, mais, des fois, ça ne répond pas aux besoins des communautés qu'on représente.

Mais, comme j'ai dit, la situation s'est améliorée, puis il faut le reconnaître.

Ce projet de loi, bien, c'était encore une extension des projets de loi 93 et 23, mais ce sont des questions qu'on se pose. On a droit de traiter deux fois avec ce projet de loi—un projet similaire. Un projet similaire que l'on ouvre encore pour adresser—mais, coudonc, il y a quelqu'un qui n'écoutait pas ou la consultation ne s'est pas faite comme il faut, c'est ce qui est arrivé. Qu'on adresse encore une situation comme on traite aujourd'hui dans ce projet de loi, qui est le 153.

Quand je pense au « broadband », parce que j'ai entendu—je sais que dans le projet de loi, il y a quatre raisons. En anglais, ils disent : « a dedicated locator request made with respect to the designated broadband project under the Building Broadband Faster Act. » Ça, c'est numéro un. On est tous pour l'Internet. On le veut tous, là. Et on veut l'Internet à haute vitesse. Moi, je me souviens d'un projet de loi, quand on a demandé d'essayer de faire certain qu'on mette toutes les régions du nord de l'Ontario—parce qu'on a vécu, quand le gaz naturel a passé. Dans le Nord, on a suivi la Route 11, puis les petits villages ou les personnes qui vivaient dans les concessions, bien, ils ont été mis de côté. C'était la raison pourquoi on a demandé que le « broadband », l'Internet à haute vitesse, inclue toutes les régions du Nord—pour ces mêmes « concernes » qu'on a traités là.

Je parle de Lac-Ste-Thérèse à Hearst—qui me vient à l'idée parce que Lac-Ste-Thérèse à Hearst, ils n'ont pas eu le gaz naturel, eux autres, puis là ils se battent pour l'avoir et ce sont des coûts extravagants pour faire rentrer le gaz naturel à Lac-Ste-Thérèse. Ils « runnent » sur le propane et je peux vous dire—ce n'est pas évident, là, sur le propane ou au bois ou à autres systèmes qu'ils peuvent avoir.

Ceci dit, on a des communautés aussi de la baie James. J'en ai parlé. J'ai posé quelques questions là-dessus—mon collègue aussi—mais pour l'Internet à haute vitesse, ils vont l'avoir quand, eux? Ils vont l'avoir quand? Probablement jamais, ou ça va prendre une couple de décennies avant qu'ils le voient. C'est parce que, ça, ce sont des projets de loi qu'ils nous proposent parce qu'ils regardent aux développements pour des villes. Moi, ce qui me brûle, c'est que j'entends tant de gouvernements dire : « Bien, tu sais, les villes font vivre le rural et on a besoin du rural. » Mais, moi, je vous dis que c'est le contraire. C'est le rural qui fait vivre les villes. Ce n'est pas compliqué. S'il n'y a pas de mines, allez-vous les avoir, vos fameuses batteries électriques? S'il n'y a pas de bois, allez-vous les bâtir, vos maisons? C'est aussi simple que ça. On a les ressources dans les régions, on les amène dans

les villes—puis on dit que ce sont les villes qui font vivre la province? Moi, je vous le dis, ce sont les régions qui font vivre la province.

Ça, ce n'est pas un concept que j'invente. C'est la réalité. Mais quand on investit—par exemple, quand on investit dans les infrastructures, quand on investit pour ça, c'est qui l'enfant pauvre? C'est le Nord. Pourtant, les ressources sont dans le Nord. Pourtant, tout ce dont on doit mettre beaucoup dans les infrastructures pour amener les richesses dans le Sud vient du Nord. Mais l'enfant pauvre, c'est qui? C'est nous qui manquons d'écoles. C'est nous qui manquons de routes. On n'a rien qu'une route. On en a demandées. On aimerait bien avoir autant de routes que vous avez. On vous demande un deux-plus-un; on est rendu à un projet pilote. On demande de l'entretien, beaucoup plus d'entretien pour nos routes. On a amélioré un peu, mais on voulait avoir des classes 1; on est rendu à 12 heures. C'est tout le temps au compte-gouttes.

Mais pourtant, sans nos richesses, sans ce qu'on amène des régions, dans le Sud, les richesses—l'enfant pauvre paye. Puis ça, encore pire. Mon collègue, il le dit très souvent. Mon collègue de Kiiwetinoong, il dit : « On est le peuple le plus riche, mais on est les plus pauvres. » Pourtant, ils étaient les premiers ici sur nos territoires. C'est leur territoire. C'est leurs richesses. On a signé des traités avec eux, qu'on était supposé de partager que ce soit la forêt, les mines, les richesses—mais pas, par exemple, quand ça vient aux infrastructures. Quand ça vient aux infrastructures, ce sont les communautés qui souffrent le plus. Elles n'ont même pas d'eau potable.

S'il y a une infrastructure qu'on devrait avoir en Ontario, une infrastructure—en passant, c'est un droit humain—c'est de l'eau potable qu'ils peuvent boire du robinet. Mais non, ils ne sont même pas capables de boire d'un robinet; ils boivent d'une eau—tu sais, quand on parle de l'enfant pauvre? Pourtant, elles sont les communautés qui vivent sur le territoire, mais qui sont les plus pauvres de notre province.

J'aimerais parler aussi—regarde l'heure; ça passe vite, là—des infrastructures. Pour nous, les infrastructures les plus importantes, ce sont les artères principales. On parle de la 11 et la 17. J'ai eu la rare chance de rencontrer le président de Ontario Road Builders, qui est Mario Villeneuve, qui vient de Hearst. Il est un de mes commettants. Je sais qu'il a parlé au gouvernement puis qu'il a dit que, nous, la 11—tout pour tout, l'infrastructure n'est pas là pour accéder ce qu'on veut développer comme richesse dans le Nord. Ce n'est pas là. Nos ponts ne sont pas là pour les prendre; les routes ne sont pas là. On parle qu'il va y en avoir, des camions, qui vont passer si ça vient que c'est développé, toutes ces richesses-là, dans le « Ring of Fire » dont on entend tellement parler.

Je vous dis que ce n'est pas long, 20 minutes de parler. On manque de temps.

Mais le point, c'est ça : on parle d'un deux-plus-un ça fait longtemps. Il y a eu un « pilot project ». Écoute, je suis content que le gouvernement, au moins, reconnaisse qu'il va y avoir un « pilot project ». Mais mon collègue de Temiskaming Shores l'a dit lui-même : il y a des centaines

de kilomètres, des centaines de milliers de kilomètres. On prend juste 14 kilomètres pour un « pilot project ». On aurait dû en faire beaucoup plus, parce qu'il y a du monde qui meurt sur nos routes, sur nos infrastructures de route.

Cela m'amène—parce que je vois que le temps passe très vite. Cette semaine, j'ai déposé un projet de loi qui s'appelle Chad's Law. Je vais vous dire ce qui est arrivé à Chad. Ça revient encore—parce qu'on parle de « building infrastructure safely ». En 2022, Chad Belanger a été victime d'un accident tragique. Chad faisait son travail. Il s'en allait ramasser—il allait avec un camion chercher des pièces. Il est parti de Kapuskasing et s'en allait à Val Rita; 15 minutes de route. Il s'en allait, quand il est arrivé sur le top de la colline, il y avait deux camions qui s'en venaient. Un camion a essayé de repasser l'autre camion où il y avait deux lignes solides—deux lignes solides; ce qu'il n'aurait pas dû passer, monsieur le Président. Mais l'autre camion a essayé de passer, et quand il est arrivé sur le top de la côte, qu'est-ce qui est arrivé? Un face-à-face. Chad s'est cassé le cou, s'est cassé la mâchoire et s'est cassé les « ribs ». Il a eu une commotion sévère. Ses organes vitaux ont été « brisés »—on parle du cœur, des poumons. Il s'est fait—par « air ambulance » à Sudbury, où il a été longtemps à l'hôpital. Il s'en est sorti, mais il a combattu pour sa vie, je peux vous le dire. Aujourd'hui, c'est certain qu'il a de l'anxiété et aussi du « PTSD ».

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Le projet de loi est simple. On parle de « safety » ici; on parle des deux lignes solides. Quand ça vient à deux lignes solides—deux lignes jaunes solides—le projet dit que, non, vous ne pouvez plus passer. La plupart du monde en Ontario, en passant, croit que c'est la loi. On se rend compte qu'en Ontario, on est la seule province où ce n'est pas la loi, la seule province au Canada. On est la plus grosse province, quasiment. Nous, qui avons la plus longue distance à traverser de notre province, et ce n'est même pas la loi.

J'écoutais M. le solliciteur général, qui m'a remercié, et il disait qu'on veut faire une meilleure province. On veut faire une meilleure province. C'est vrai qu'on veut travailler ensemble pour faire une meilleure province. Bien, j'espère que M. le solliciteur général va forcer—pas forcer, mais faire assez pour avancer le projet de loi. Ça, c'est non partisan. On parle de santé et sécurité. On parle de santé, et j'espère—et je regarde le gouvernement, parce que c'est vous qui pouvez l'avancer. Moi, je l'ai déposé, mais je vous demande : ce n'est pas partisan.

Monsieur le Ministre du Travail, ça, c'est un travailleur qui s'en allait chercher des pièces pour son travail; ça lui a quasiment cassé la vie à cause qu'en Ontario, les deux lignes, c'est une recommandation et non la loi.

Les députés du Nord, bons conservateurs, vous l'avez vécu. Je suis certain que vous l'avez vécu, parce que je l'ai vécu à multiples reprises, moi. À multiples reprises, j'ai été obligé de me tasser parce qu'il y avait deux véhicules qui s'en venaient. On roule sur des routes isolées, fait que le monde prend des chances. Le monde prend des chances avec leurs vies.

Fait que, je demande au gouvernement : c'est non partisan; c'est pour des raisons de sécurité. Je vous

demande de faire avancer ce projet de loi-là pour qu'on n'ait pas une autre personne—un autre Chad—qui vive les mêmes conditions qu'il a vécues ou, encore pire, qui perde la vie, parce que je peux vous dire que la famille a passé des temps très difficiles. Je vous demande de faire avancer le projet de loi. Je pense c'est la bonne chose à faire ici.

Aussi, les municipalités—on a tous rencontré Good Roads. Les municipalités demandent aussi d'améliorer les routes rurales. Dans leur chose, ils disent :

“Simply put, rural roads are more dangerous than other roads. In 2020, there were 398 traffic fatalities on municipal roads, of which 217 occurred in rural municipalities. The unfortunate reality is that, with only 17% of the provincial population, rural Ontario accounts for 55% of the traffic fatalities on municipal roads. Many rural, remote, and northern municipalities are responsible for maintaining the road network on a smaller population/tax base.” And they need more help from the province. “As a result, these roads tend to be older, in poorer condition, and incorporate only basic safety infrastructure.”

But there are other jurisdictions that give more money that are addressing that. Ontario should follow suit, because you've seen, you've met with—I know you've met with the same people, with the municipalities, Good Roads. Most of the people from the north have these roads; we live on these roads. So please do the right thing and finance these roads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I listened to the member speak in both official languages, and I listened carefully to the French translation to English to assist me. He wisely made reference to non-partisanship and safety and so forth, and building, as I heard him.

This is, of course, Bill 153 we're talking about tonight, and it's building infrastructure safely. That is the name of the act. Given that it is about safety, public safety; given that it is about preventative measures to ensure safety, but it's also about building efficiently and cost-effectively—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The minister's phone.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: —will the member and his colleagues be supporting this bill?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: So you're telling me if I vote in favour of this, you're going to move my bill forward and you'll support it? If that's the case, then maybe we can talk. And I'd be glad to talk to you about this, because I think Chad's Law is a great thing you could support and move forward as a minister and enforce, because infrastructure is important, but safety on the highways is extremely important when you're talking to people in the north, in my riding.

People are dying on our roads, Minister. They're dying. It's unacceptable. It shouldn't happen. I don't think it's justifiable that people are dying. The people up north are scared of driving on Highways 11 and 17 right now. They're scared. You've seen dash videos of vehicles, I'm sure, and it's not only truckers; it's all types of vehicles taking chances, passing where they shouldn't be.

This bill is supported. If you want to support the bill, we'll talk and you'll get the answer.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Merci au député de Mushkegowuk—Baie James. Nous apprenons beaucoup à propos des vies du Nord avec votre discours. Merci pour ça.

Je ne sais pas si c'est la traduction exacte, mais on dit que ce projet de loi parle de construire des infrastructures en toute sécurité. Ce que vous avez dit ici, c'est que les infrastructures du gouvernement, il y a un manque d'entretien, surtout pour les autoroutes.

Est-ce que vous pouvez nous expliquer ce qui est le pire manque d'entretien pour vos « constituents » dans votre circonscription?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci pour le bel effort. J'apprécie tout le temps quand on fait des efforts pour parler en français.

Écoute, honnêtement, une des plus grandes infrastructures qu'on a—tous mes collègues du Nord vont vous le dire—ce sont nos routes. C'est l'entretien des routes. On commence l'hiver. On commence l'hiver, puis on a déjà eu des fermetures de routes. On a déjà vu plein de voitures dans des clos—j'appelle ça le « clos », moi, mais dans les champs, ou qui ont pris le bord de la route. Les routes sont fermées. Il y a une voie fermée. On voit encore trop, trop d'incidents qui ne devraient pas arriver, pourtant on se demande pourquoi ils arrivent—honnêtement.

Je pense qu'il manque de pratique ou de « training »—si je peux user du mot—pour les conducteurs quand ça vient aux routes hivernales. C'est pour ça que c'est dangereux. Mais l'entretien des chemins est numéro un à la grandeur du Nord.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

M. Anthony Leardi: C'est toujours un plaisir d'écouter le député de Mushkegowuk—Baie James. Il a parlé un peu des dates limites qui s'appliquent aux villes du Nord. Et moi, je sais que ce projet de loi qui parle de la législation—la législation envisage quelques dates limites pour certaines villes et certaines régions. Si les dates limites ne sont pas dans la législation, elles sont mises dans les réglementations. Moi-même, je ne suis pas au courant des dates limites pour les villes du Nord. Est-ce que le député peut nous donner quelques exemples des dates limites pour les villes du Nord, par exemple, comme à Kapuskasing?

1840

M. Guy Bourgouin: Très bonne question. Écoute, honnêtement, je ne pourrais pas te dire les dates limites. Mais comme j'ai parlé de certaines « issues » qui étaient arrivées, comme j'ai dit, ce serait injuste de moi de dire qu'il n'y a pas eu d'amélioration. Probablement, ce projet de loi va aider encore. Va-t-il y avoir encore des « issues »? Écoute, il va en avoir, c'est sûr et certain, parce qu'on en a vécues dans le passé.

Mais je dois admettre que quand, moi, j'ai fait les appels à Enbridge—parce que c'était surtout relié au gaz naturel, ce qu'on a eu; il y en avait d'autres, mais c'était prédominant à Enbridge. Enbridge, quand est venu le

temps, après avoir eu des Zooms et des discussions, ils nous ont envoyé des équipes pour répondre au « backlog » qu'on a eu. Oui, il y a eu des améliorations. Je reconnais Enbridge et le travail qu'ils ont fait.

J'ai parlé à mon assistante avant que j'aie eu la chance d'en discuter et elle a dit : « Guy, ça s'est beaucoup amélioré. Ce n'est plus au même point où on était. » Fait que, probablement, le projet de loi va aussi aider à cette situation-là.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Thank you to the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay. When I walked in, he was in the middle of his speech, and because of the French language, I put on my headphones, and he started pointing at me and he said “the forgotten child.” I guess the translation was a bit delayed, but he was actually referring to the member from Kiiwetinoong.

I know that the Musselwhite mine is only 40 kilometres south of my home First Nation, which is Kingfisher Lake. I go to the Musselwhite mine every now and then, and when you turn on your phone, Tbaytel works there. When you go 40 kilometres north of there, which is my home First Nation, you've got 2G, right?

What's the difference between a mine and the First Nations? I know the second-most northerly community in your riding is Peawanuck. How will Peawanuck be able to have a better broadband system in their community?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I usually say “the forgotten people” because we don't have the service that the rest of the province has. The communities that I represent don't have it, and Peawanuck is one of the most northern communities. And I can guarantee you, the service is not close to what everyone else benefits from, and other communities also.

The farther north you get, the harder it is. Though there is some service, it's very limited and it's sometimes overcharged. When you go there, you have to go to certain places to get some of the services to be able to use Internet. But just imagine, if you don't have Internet, how do you do schoolwork? How do you do research? That is a reality that people on the James Bay coast live on a regular basis, while we take for granted what they would only dream to have.

They would love to have clean drinking water, too, just to begin with.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to give the member another opportunity just to further explain to us what you've said and why the north is “the forgotten people” and why it's especially irritating when you know that all of the riches—les ressources, les biens du Nord—but the benefits don't accrue in the north. Can you just explain the feeling of the people that live in the north?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: The feeling? Well, they live on the most riches, and when I think of the James Bay coast, they were first here, they signed treaties—not respected. They live on the richest mining—we think of the Ring of

Fire—and yet they're the poorest people. They don't have housing—they have housing, but it's multi-generational. They don't even have drinking water.

We're talking broadband. They would love to have that, but they don't even have road access. So even from the north, Highways 11 and 17—all the wood and the mining comes from the region, and yet it goes to the south to be processed. They say, "Well, we get all the riches," and it should be the other way around.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to share my support for the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023.

The Building Infrastructure Safely Act, 2023, is a testament to our government's dedication to fostering a safer, more efficient and cost-effective environment for infrastructure development in Ontario. This legislation, with its focus on eliminating locate fees, streamlining processes and protecting both workers and critical infrastructure positions Ontario as a leader in responsible and forward-looking governance.

As we debate on the merits of this proposed legislation, let us keep in mind the transformative impact it can have on our communities, our economy and the future of our ever-growing, ever-evolving great province of Ontario.

I will begin with discussing the broader vision and commitment of our government to building that future. The most ambitious capital plan in the province's history is under way, an investment exceeding \$185 billion. This significant commitment aims to revitalize schools, hospitals, public transit, roads and housing, and provide universal access to high-speed Internet for every community across the province by the end of 2025.

The improvement of the locate delivery system, as outlined in the Building Infrastructure Safely Act, is integral to realizing these ambitious goals. They will not only ensure the completion of key infrastructure projects in a safe and cost-efficient way, but also ensure the benefits for each community across Ontario, today and for generations to come.

Madam Speaker, simply put, infrastructure is the backbone of our society, for strong, modern and viable infrastructure is key for the well-being of every Ontarian. Critical infrastructure ensures and supports our communities as it empowers our fellow citizens to grow and reach their full potential throughout all stages of their lives. The construction of hospitals and long-term-care homes is a commitment to the well-being of our most vulnerable individuals and cherished family members. The deployment of high-speed Internet infrastructure ensures that every corner of the province can actively engage and flourish in the digital landscape of the 21st century.

Expanding and improving access to high-speed Internet is top of mind to many Ontarians. In my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills, I know high-speed Internet is a big priority, but for different reasons than other regions in the province. My constituents are more focused on reliability and speed rather than availability and access. It

is vital that we recognize that there are different needs for different people. That's why it is our job to create policy that considers the needs of all Ontarians, whether that is in the east, west, north or south of our great province.

Whether it's through a new highway or transit line, our government is building Ontario to allow Ontarians to spend more time with those they love and more time to follow their passions in life.

1850

Since forming government in 2018, we have made great progress, as we promised. Our government is getting it done for the people of Ontario on housing and transportation. The people can see that, everywhere they go in and around my riding.

Public transit is a key driver of economic growth in Ontario, connecting people whether they are going to school, going to work, or running—having good time. Amongst our various government initiatives, this bill will play an important role in allowing our government to complete projects such as the Ontario Line, which is vital to supporting our economy. It will alleviate gridlock while creating thousands of local jobs for those in the GTA. The Ontario Line alone will support 4,700 jobs annually during construction over the next decade. These are jobs that will support families, new Canadians, and anyone who is willing to help build the Ontario dream.

These historic investments in infrastructure like transit will make a difference in people's lives while creating good-paying jobs for all Ontarians in communities across our great province, from Hudson Bay to the Rideau Canal.

To build a stronger Ontario, our government is strengthening and connecting communities, expanding and integrating our province's transit network, supporting economic growth, creating more jobs and housing and improving the lives of Ontarians for generations to come. This government is doing the hard work now. We are putting in the effort to improve and expand the infrastructure we already have and kick-start these long-awaited projects. While these changes may seem small, they are vital to achieving the dreams of Ontario. We are committed to doing the hard work required to make these transit projects happen, and all members of the government share in the commitment, including the Honourable Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

This brings us to the importance of the bill. As we navigate the details of this legislation, it is imperative to acknowledge the insights shared by Todd McCarthy, Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery. He rightly emphasizes the need to build critical infrastructure faster and smarter to support our growing communities.

The proposed ban on locate fees is a strategic move to mitigate the risk of spiralling costs, a factor that would definitively result in project delays and increased financial burdens.

The Building Infrastructure Safely Act, if passed, would streamline processes, ensuring that transformative projects, such as transit improvements, expanded high-speed Internet access and accelerated home construction move ahead efficiently to meet the evolving needs of our constituents.

Madam Speaker, the work of locating underground infrastructure is a vital safety precaution in construction, to prevent accidents and for the protection of our workers and communities, as well as ensuring that our vital networks are not damaged. We know these accidents can happen, but it's our responsibility to ensure we minimize those mistakes. As a government, we want to do everything we can to make sure that the system works well and is easy and efficient for the work to begin and get done, so the people of Ontario can also get it done. The timely delivery of these locates is critical to economic, societal and government priorities, because we all want to see fewer construction delays, lower costs and overall greater safety.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues spoke a bit about some of the large-scale infrastructure priorities in the province, like building Ontario's much-needed housing that is affordable for everyone in every region of Ontario; new public transportation and roads that reach every corner of the province; and, of course, improving the reach of high-speed Internet and expanding broadband connections.

By 2041, Ontario's population is expected to grow by 30%. Every year, we are welcoming more than 500,000 newcomers to Canada who mostly settle in Ontario. Simply put, we need critical infrastructure now. We need to build Ontario so our critical infrastructure can continue to grow with our new population. While this is good news, because a growing population means more jobs, it's also clear that we need to adapt to support our ever-growing communities. Now is the time to meet the demands of the future. This is why our government has introduced this bill, to ensure that government is nimble and responsive to the needs of the community. With our growth, new and increasing pressure is put on Ontario's infrastructure capacity. We cannot look away from this challenge; we must make these critical investments today to keep up with a growing population. This is why this bill is so vital, so nothing can stand in the way of Ontario reaching its full potential.

I know that my colleagues in this House have effectively presented the argument to restrict owners and operators of underground infrastructure from imposing fees for locates. I reiterate my support and I will say that this bill that will help us build up Ontario and improves processes is something that all members of this House should stand by. I believe it is the best and most cost-effective way forward, not just to keep with long-standing industry practices in Canada and the United States that have served us well so far.

Our government is proposing policies to enhance our systems before problems occur, and this could be as soon as the next construction season. We are ensuring a more efficient and effective system that works for all Ontarians.

Ontario One Call's primary purpose is to locate requests from excavators to the appropriate underground infrastructure owners or operators, and dedicated locators. Their mission is to increase the efficiency, timeliness and coordination of digging activities by excavators and promoting safe digging practices.

They also have a growing role in helping to keep the system working well and in educating the public each and every step of the way.

In recent years, we have heard stakeholders expressing concerns with the timeliness of locate information, causing burdens and delays in fulfilling important construction projects across the province. Madam Speaker, the range of things that the 12 administrative authorities our Ministry of Public and Business Services oversees, such as One Call, is kind of staggering. They all impact the daily lives of Ontarians so it is important that our government keeps an eye on the way they work, the powers they have and how they are used.

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Our government has asked Ontario One Call to take on a more complex role and, as such, it is important to provide them with the tools to help them work better with us. But taking on more complex work to support the improvement of efficiencies in locate delivery requires better systems, backed up by better and sustainable resources. These investments are needed to achieve what Ontario elected this government, Premier Ford's government, to do.

Madam Speaker, the changes that came out of the Getting Ontario Connected Act from 2022 are improving the locate delivery system and making the process of obtaining a locate more efficient. And, of course, what matters most is that they are maintaining Ontario's strict safety standards.

Earlier this year, our ministry met with a wide range of stakeholders such as underground infrastructure owners, excavators and others to learn more about how best to provide more flexibility and enhance efficiency in locate delivery. Through this process, we have heard extensive feedback from stakeholders on our various proposed measures to enhance locate delivery requirements, minimizing the financial impacts on providing locates and balancing the need for locate improvements, burden on the industry and the overall public safety for all Ontarians. The bill we are debating today is a result of these consultations.

Madam Speaker, I believe the minister mentioned earlier some of the concerns heard from stakeholders, partly related to the new administrative penalties that are slated to come into effect next year. They have shared financial concerns and their ability to meet timelines with high volumes of construction projects and the shortage of locate professionals. For me, I'm very comforted to hear that the focus of Ontario One Call will remain on ensuring individuals are aware of their responsibilities and working with them towards a common goal of compliance with the law. Knowing that One Call will make every effort to educate individuals on their responsibilities under the act, with penalties used only where appropriate, is reassuring to me that we focused on the right things. It is also important to note there is precedent for administrative authorities using these kinds of powers, and we all want to see them used appropriately.

At the same time, excavators should find the results of the changes from the past year encouraging. If I compare

January to July 2022 to the same period in 2023, we have seen an increase of 25% of locates that were completed on time. The data shows a significant improvement, and I believe that by working with One Call we can help move these improvements along even further. We have heard from many industry stakeholders, and I know it is not always easy bringing together different viewpoints at much-needed change.

This bill is just one part of our government's broader legislative agenda to support priorities the people of Ontario need—things like building more housing units, including affordable housing and long-term care. For example, the Minister of Finance recently released the fall economic statement, our government's plan for a responsible, targeted approach to provide the flexibility needed to help to address the ongoing economic uncertainty and to build critical infrastructure in growing communities while laying a strong fiscal foundation for future generations.

Our government is moving forward with the most ambitious capital plan in Ontario's history by investing more than \$184 billion over the next decade. I repeat: \$184 billion in new funding to build Ontario for future generations' use.

We are building for the future on the pillars set by the accomplishments of the past and to build for the future. That's why this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is investing more than \$70 billion over the next 10 years to transform public transit infrastructure throughout the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you very much to the member for his comments on the bill. I've heard many government members mention throughout the course of the debate this afternoon and evening that this bill will speed up the process for developers and builders and for ordinary Ontarians.

But the bill also removes the requirement that the owners of infrastructure pay compensation when they miss deadlines. So I'm wondering what steps the government is going to take to make sure that these locate requests are actually fulfilled in a timely way if there's no longer any requirement that the owners compensate builders if their request isn't fulfilled in a timely way, and how are we going to make sure that people don't get frustrated waiting for a request to actually be fulfilled and start digging without receiving the answer?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member for the question. As you heard from all the members who spoke about the bill, we are trying to fast-track the process of locating underground infrastructure so that we can move on with the projects. Again, if we look into the double work that is done in locate services and the time delays we have in many projects because of not being able to get that piece of the process done and fulfilled for the safety of the construction to move on and get to the next steps, we needed more excavators, more official locaters who can help us to achieve to meet that deadline.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: The member spoke about historic investments that our government is making into infrastructure, \$185 billion, and this includes \$4 billion to help bring high-speed Internet across every community in this province, including our rural and remote areas. In today's day and age, broadband is so important. Whether it comes to accessing health care through the Internet, working from home, or even for our farmers, access to reliable broadband is something that is really important for our government.

Can the member tell us how this bill, Bill 153, will provide efficiency and convenience to help speed up these Internet infrastructure projects?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member from Mississauga Centre for her question. Definitely, I can say that I was very big to trust that the change in the locate services is actually a game-changer in construction; for example, the proposed number of changes that will drastically improve the safety and efficiency of underground locates.

One particularly interesting aspect of this proposed legislation is the expansion of the dedicated locater model, in which a single dedicated locater will be able to search for all the potential underground infrastructure on a given project site. That model is currently used in broadband development projects and has proven to be quite successful. By expanding this model to other kinds of projects, we can help cut costs and increase locate efficiency, thanks to the use of just one skilled, dedicated locater who can perform all the required locates.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thanks to the member for his debate on Bill 153—the Ontario underground infrastructure notification system.

Under section 4, there's a re-enacted area. It's re-enacted to authorize the corporation to, among other things, set and collect fees, costs or other charges, if done in accordance with processes and criteria approved by the minister. I just wondered how those criteria will come to be. Have there been discussions with stakeholders, or even engineers, on that criteria, so that people understand what their obligations are, in order to make sure that those fees are fair in that process?

1910

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: This is done in conjunction with our stakeholder consultations which we did. We have to understand that not all the projects have the same nature—the size, the criticality, the timelines—so there have been lots of discussions about some specific situations and projects where they need a specific, tailored model in locating the services when the site is complex. That's where we added that piece of legislation, to be giving some flexibility to others for some of the challenges which come with some specific sites.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Earlier, we heard the minister speaking. We've heard the member speak about proposed

changes that would enable Ontario One Call to have the ability to issue administrative monetary penalties against underground infrastructure owners, operators and excavators who are not compliant. As with any well-regulated industry or sector, especially those with strong implications on public safety, these kinds of measures are necessary to hold the actors and participants accountable to their time frames, which have significant impact on the delivery of vital projects.

Through you, Speaker, could the member please elaborate on how administrative monetary penalties work as an enforcement measure, and why they will work well for Ontario One Call in particular?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Again, as I spoke before in my speech and debate, I said we understand that we are giving those authorities to One Call, and we understand what the powers we are giving are, and we expect them to use those powers appropriately. When we have some of the construction sites or some of the locators at an excavation that do not meet their deadlines, and those multi-million dollar projects are delayed, a one-day delay could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, so we have to have some sort of penalties to make sure that we are adding some measures to reward the good players and penalize the bad players.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: The One Call act sets out to correct issues with obtaining appropriate locates and establish the One Call non-profit as the official contact for people and companies digging. The motto of One Call is “Call Before You Dig,” and this motto highlights the importance of obtaining proper locates, so that gas lines, water mains and other utility lines are clearly marked and documented before construction projects begin.

Can the member tell us why it’s important to call before we dig, keeping the health and safety of our workers and everyone involved in construction projects a main priority?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Yes, this legislated one call to dig regime will make Ontario, through this Bill 153, the one jurisdiction with this legislated one call to dig regime. This means that underground infrastructure owners and operators must become members of Ontario One Call and provide underground infrastructure location information in a timely manner, not only to assist vital construction and development, but to ensure the public’s safety and reliance on critical infrastructure.

Other provinces, such as British Columbia and Alberta, have voluntary one call to dig regimes which get the job done. But here in Ontario, we are taking it one step further. There are no legislated locate delivery time limits anywhere else in Canada, and with this proposed legislation, we are setting Ontario up to continue being a national leader in this and many other aspects.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I’m pleased to be able to have the opportunity to add my voice to Bill 153, Building Infrastructure Safety Act. I just want to start by saying, typically I have an issue with titles that are named on these bills, which typically don’t have much reference to the bill itself. But this one does reflect somewhat, of course, safety that is needed, but I think within that safety feature, much more could have been added to this bill. I’ll be reasonable about the fact that making sure that people call before they dig is definitely a safety issue. So I’ll give the government this one on that title, but like I said, when we’re talking about safety of infrastructure, I think we can definitely go much further than just calling before you dig.

I’m going to also take a little lenience on my time to speak today. First of all, I have to also say that I have to share my time with the member from Kiiwetinoong for that. But when I saw this bill, it made me think of my brother-in-law. My brother-in-law Corey passed away on Boxing Day this past year, and he worked for PVS. So it made me think of him. He did the locates for gas lines, which was something that he took great pride in, knowing how important that work was.

But he had several issues that he used to talk to me about within safety, within the actual organization in making sure that locates were done properly, that they were done on time and that there was consistency across the field when it come to working within PVS between municipalities would be different compensation, so different wage packages for different municipalities when it came to PVS contract work.

I had to raise my brother-in-law Corey because we definitely miss him and talking about this bill, I couldn’t do that without actually giving him a shout-out and saying I miss you, brother.

The next thing that I want to talk about: We’re doing construction at my home, building an addition in my home to house my daughter and my granddaughter. We hear about, in the House, on a regular basis and we here in our communities of our kids living in our basement. Well, mine is currently in my basement, but we’re building an addition upstairs so that they will have a safe, affordable home for a lifetime. While we’re doing this work, of course, we did all the locates and everything that was necessary. But one day we had machinery there and they were just scraping up the front grass, cleaning up debris from some of the building materials—not a dig by no means—and before we knew it, the neighbour was out on our front lawn saying “My Internet is down. What happened?”

So the guys went and had a look, and right at the very edge of the sidewalk in the grass were the cable lines, which were not dug properly, were not buried properly. You look at the side of my house to my garden on the south side of my property where the cable goes in, you will also see the cable wires right there—all exposed, never dug properly, never buried properly. This is also a concern that I think many people within our communities of providers not taking the time to install these wires properly. Thank goodness for us that my neighbour wasn’t too angry,

because she does work from home, and that we were able to get our provider out to my house quickly to be able to repair those Internet lines so that she could get back to work. But like I said, call before you dig would not have prevented that because they weren't dug properly. They were literally right at the grass surface, which you couldn't see until they were just raked—and there it was—and chopped. So, not so good, and I think that providers have a responsibility to ensure that they're also doing their portion of the job properly.

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I also want to talk about the fact that April is Dig Safe Month, which is truly important. I know we've heard from several of our members, including the member from Oshawa, who is our lead critic on this file, talking about the lack of education built into any of these bills that we've seen before us. We've had a private member's bill, we've had Bill 93 and we had Bill 23, I think. This is the fourth bill on it, anyway, and there's never been any education built into this.

Now, we have many people who dig gardens in their backyard or they're just putting in some stones or cement or whatever—they're building some kind of something in their backyard which they're not really thinking is a big problem. And yet they could run into some safety hazards and cut into something that shouldn't be tapped into. So making sure that there's education in our communities is really important, and we know that the government has done many public service—what they want to call it—broadcasts on our local radio stations. They put out commercials regarding things that they want to talk about, like how great they were about housing when, really, they were developing on the greenbelt and that didn't need to happen. I heard these on my local radio station.

Take the month of April as the safe month and really do that kind of education, to put it out there as true public service announcements. At the beginning of April, spring is coming; people are then going to start with their digs and preparing their backyard for the summer to come and for gardens and new porches. Really instill how important it is to have these locates done in people's yards, regardless of whether they're in the front, because most people would think, if they need locates done, it's only in the front yard, but really, it's any part of their property, which people are just not thinking about. So taking that opportunity in April to really put out that education I think would be a fantastic thing to do for the safety of our community and to ensure that nobody is breaking the law unwillingly, unknowingly, and that everybody is safe at the end of the day.

Now, this bill does have a few things that it's doing. It's adding in some different definitions for the type of locate requests, which I think is important because this is where broadband is mentioned into this bill. That is definitely something that we know we need across the province. This government has been in power for five years promising broadband, broadband, broadband, and we have yet to see it. We have yet to see any of those broadband dollars move into the sectors, into communities to fulfill the need. That needs to happen.

And then there is emergency requests, there are specified requests and then there are large projects and standard requests. So there are a few different things that they're trying to add. It also allows Ontario One Call to independently set fees to their members. Their members would be Enbridge, Bell, Hydro One—they would be the members. Now there will be fees to them to be able to pay for their administrative costs. Because, if you think about it, this is a big cost that is being put onto these members, and where are those dollars coming from? They're probably coming from the homeowners, from the ratepayers, to be able to do that, and as we know, bills are high enough and stopping them from having to add more cost onto the ratepayer is important.

There are also time limits. We know that time limits are a problem. The locates are supposed to be done within five to 10 days. I know that in my community, I hear from my constituents that they're not getting their locates done on time. It's holding up their building projects, it's holding them up from doing the work that they're doing, particularly when we're in a housing crisis and when we need things built. We need them built in a timely manner. We've heard from the north that times are really a problem up there. So I think some time built in here to really help that One Call facilitate that need in the north is important, because they definitely need it.

I see I'm out of time already. I'm going to be, as I said, sharing my time with the member from Kiiwetinoong. I'm just happy I've had the opportunity to put a few things on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: It's always an honour to be able to stand up in this place, this House, for the people of Kiiwetinoong. Kiiwetinoong is a very unique riding. There are 31 First Nations, 24 fly-in First Nations and four small municipalities.

When we talk about Bill 153, An Act to amend Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, also known as the Building Infrastructure Safety Act, I'm going to share a story and talk about it from the First Nations' perspective. I'm going to use my First Nation of Kingfisher Lake as an example.

There's a settlement that we use to be at before. They moved from Big Beaver House to Kingfisher Lake in 1966. Around 1973, they built the school. That was the time when they had the first water and sewer system. They had a clinic as well. They had the water and sewer system because guess who were the teachers? Guess who were the nurses? They were outside people. Those outside people were typically white people that came in and taught us the English language, where they totally bypassed all the homes that were living right beside—towards the school. I share that, because it talks about underground infrastructure. That's what I can remember.

Around 1976 is when we officially became a reserve. In 1976, all of a sudden, we have a chief. We have a chief and council. That's the first time ever that we had—all of a sudden the federal government said, "We'll give you

housing. We'll give you health care. We'll give you roads. We'll give you operation maintenance." That was in 1976. In 1977, I see this chopper building this tower. I was wondering what was going on, but they were building a Bell tower, a microwave tower. Then, the next thing you know, all of a sudden, all of these phones go on. We only had two numbers. I remember our number at my dad's house was three-nine. The ones on rotary phones, three-nine. We had to dial zero to get an operator—I don't know where it was—maybe Thunder Bay; I don't know. That was 1977. I remember this as a kid. I remember there were these things that stuck out of the ground, and that's how the phone system worked. Underground—when we talk about underground infrastructure.

The next thing that happened was in 1982. The First Nations themselves started building their own hydro system. I remember being a little kid. Then, all of a sudden, they're building these towers, their own towers. They used their own—whatever, cut down their own trees. All of a sudden, you see these hydro lines. Then they start up their diesel generator. All of a sudden, we have hydro—holy moly. This is 1982.

The years go by: 1987, I'm away for high school. All of a sudden, in 1987-88, I land at an airport, because I left in a floatplane, and I came back on a runway.

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So I'm talking about infrastructure, and I'm trying to think about what's underground.

I remember being at the airport, and I remember landing—holy smokes—on land. It was so amazing. This was 1987, 1988.

About 1993, Ontario Hydro took over the hydro, and all of a sudden we got these new poles, new diesel generators—all of a sudden everything was up to standard. So what's going on?

The next thing you know, you have construction going on, in 1994. What they were building was the water and sewer system, all of a sudden. The next thing you know, I turned on the water—I had running water in 1995.

When I think about infrastructure underground, I think about those things. They built the water and sewer system to make sure that they had the proper power to run the water system in the homes. So that was very interesting. All of a sudden, you're flushing you have running water—never mind the boil-water advisories that we had. So it's not too long since we've had running water.

I think about the underground infrastructure that's there—and I don't know how long and who pays once you try to find those lines. The water and sewer systems—there must be old lines somewhere; I'm not sure.

It wasn't until 2010, 2012, when they started installing the fibre optic cable from Pickle Lake, and then they did a route to Red Lake—they did the whole north; I think they did 16 or 18 First Nations. I remember this project, and they just followed what we call the ice roads or the winter roads. About five feet, 10 feet on the side of the winter road—that's where they dug maybe two feet, and it goes all the way up, all the way to the north. That's the fibre. That was in 2010. The problem is that the equipment that's

on the head end is not updated, so we don't get the fibre optic that we're supposed to get. It's always on full capacity, which makes it very slow. The infrastructure in those communities is very slow.

Earlier, during the debate, I kept on talking about 2G. I have my Tbaytel phone. When I travel to Port Severn, Big Trout Lake, Webequie, I get 2G on this phone. It's useful when you don't have any cell service—at least I can phone out. But if I go to the Musselwhite mine, a gold mine just 40 kilometres south of my community, I get LTE or 5G. What's the difference? Is it because they have gold? Is it because we're First Nations? I think that's a thing—how will this bill make sure that we get the same service that we're supposed to get?

I think it's important to talk about the cost. Sometimes when I travel to the 24 fly-in First Nations—it costs resources to be able to access these First Nations. It costs money to travel to these First Nations. Who's going to pay for those costs? Is it the government? Is it the provider?

For far too long, as First Nations, we've been taken advantage of. You cannot continue to have that approach, especially when we talk about reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot be just a set of words that you use. Reconciliation has to be performative. You have to have action behind it. You have to have some resources behind it.

Anyway, I just wanted to share that story. Talking about infrastructure on reserve is important as well. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my two colleagues across the way for their remarks this evening. As I mentioned earlier in one of my questions—my question is to the member from Hamilton Mountain.

My question is, we know that the service that Ontario One Call provides is essential for ensuring critical infrastructure in our province, and I know there's unanimous support among the sector around these amendments to One Call, ensuring that we get critical infrastructure like affordable housing, schools, roads and bridges built in a timely manner.

I was wondering if the member from Hamilton Mountain will be supporting this bill. Yes or no is fine, Speaker.

Miss Monique Taylor: Well, I guess the member will find out momentarily when we have the opportunity to vote, but I think we've been speaking pretty highly in favour of this bill. We really haven't seen any snags or any poison pills, which is nice to see, because usually when we see bills come from this government they're full of nice little goodies but then they also have poison pills, which we're not able to support because of that.

But they know that and it's usually a gotcha moment but I don't see that in this bill, so I guess we'll have the opportunity to vote momentarily.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is to my colleague the MPP for Kiiwetinoong. You talked a little bit about what I would call the blatant discrepancies between the infra-

structure that you experienced growing up and how slow it was coming. And to this day it still exists. In particular you keep saying, “Why, just 40 kilometres away, can I get 5G because there’s a mine there but in my community I don’t have that?”

Also, we heard so much about roads in the north, not necessarily in your riding, where people are taking their lives in their hands to drive on the roads.

I’m just going to give you another opportunity to talk about how your community feels or how you feel representing your constituents, that there’s such a discrepancy. And even while this is a good bill that talks about infrastructure, it’s not talking about the lack of infrastructure that you have in your riding.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: My last comment in my speech should have been, “Don’t ask me any questions.” No, I’m just kidding.

Certainly, it’s always important to have equal equity in, I guess, infrastructure. Right now, for example, if we had 5G in the communities, that would be such a difference maker, for safety reasons. There are so many things that happen on these lands when we’re out on the lands and we don’t have access to ambulances. We don’t have access to 24-hour care from physician services, that type of thing. All I’m saying is that broadband is a very critical infrastructure for fly-in First Nations in northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Next question.

Mr. Ric Bresee: My question is a fairly simple one. We’ve heard the opposition speaking quite a bit about the infrastructure ideas that they believe should have been added into this bill, but I would like to bring it back to the bill itself. I think I’ve heard it but I just want to be very clear: Does the member support the One Call system and the enhancements that are provided here?

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to remind the member that in 2012—I was here at the time—that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member, Bob Bailey, from Sarnia–Lambton, brought forward this legislation, because it’s good legislation and it’s a good thing to ensure that there is safety before people dig so it doesn’t cause explosions and have gas leaks and hydro outages and Internet outages.

I think it’s unfortunate that it’s taken three bills—a private member’s bill, two other bills and now this bill—to actually get to this point, and now we know that there will probably still be more coming, because sometimes the Conservatives like to rush legislation and they don’t exactly get it right. They don’t do enough outreach to talk to the people who are affected by this and the industry. So then it gives them the reason to have to bring more bills and more bills when, really, if they did the hard work and they did it right the first time, we wouldn’t have to see several bills on the same topic.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Questions? Questions?

Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. McCarthy has moved second reading of Bill 153, An Act to amend the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I recognize the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I respectfully request that Bill 153 be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): All right.

CONVENIENT CARE AT HOME ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA PRESTATION COMMUNE DE SOINS À DOMICILE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend the Connecting Care Act, 2019 with respect to home and community care services and health governance and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 pour des soins interconnectés en ce qui concerne les services de soins à domicile et en milieu communautaire et la gouvernance de la santé et apportant des modifications connexes à d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I move the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Mr. Calandra has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow the question to be put to the House.

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

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Orders of the day.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): There being no further business, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1943.

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