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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

HE-63

Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy

Reducing Gridlock, Saving
You Time Act, 2024

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Monday 18 November 2024

Journal des débats (Hansard)

HE-63

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

Loi de 2024
sur le désengorgement
du réseau routier et le gain
de temps

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Lundi 18 novembre 2024

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Monday 18 November 2024

Lundi 18 novembre 2024

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 2.

**REDUCING GRIDLOCK, SAVING
YOU TIME ACT, 2024
LOI DE 2024 SUR LE DÉSENGORGEMENT
DU RÉSEAU ROUTIER ET LE GAIN
DE TEMPS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 212, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various Acts with respect to highways, broadband-related expropriation and other transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à édicter deux lois et à modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne les voies publiques, les expropriations liées aux projets d'Internet à haut débit et d'autres questions relatives au transport.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good morning. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We're here to conduct public hearings on Bill 212, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various Acts with respect to highways, broadband-related expropriation and other transportation-related matters.

We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard and broadcast and recording. Are there any questions before we begin?

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Seeing none, appearing today is the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria. He will have 20 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 40 minutes for questions and answers divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of five minutes for the independent member.

Are there any questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Harden has a point of order.

Mr. Joel Harden: I would like to seek unanimous consent for the purposes of committee hearings today for the use of simple photographic images given to us from citizens

who are very passionate about the government's bill—just a motion of unanimous consent, please.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That is not a valid point of order, but you can share the images individually with the members through the Clerk, if you wish. The Clerk has said that those are the rules that we go by.

MPP Harden?

Mr. Joel Harden: Point of order: Are slide presentations allowed as we make remarks and ask questions to the minister or to other guests visiting us today?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): To clarify the rules, the presenters can use slides. As an MPP, if you have slides to share, again, you go through the Clerk and send it to the committee members. So it's not for MPPs to do slide presentations—just to clarify—it's just presenters. Okay?

Mr. Joel Harden: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You can do another point of order. I will remind people that I have to bring the gavel down at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm wondering if you could help point me to the rules which would not allow for me to ask for unanimous consent, which I'm used to as a tool, for some liberty and some inclusiveness so residents of Ontario can make sure the images they sent to me that they would like shared at this committee, germane to this debate, are allowed to be shared.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Again, it's not a valid point of order. We have gone over the guidelines.

Mr. Joel Harden: I was just wondering if you could point me to which part of the guidelines.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): If you want to ask for unanimous consent, you can. That's about the best we can offer you at this point in time.

Mr. Joel Harden: I just did.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Did you ask for unanimous consent? I did not hear that part, I'm sorry.

Members of the committee, is there unanimous consent to distribute photographic images from MPP Harden? There is not unanimous consent.

We have Minister Sarkaria. You have 20 minutes to speak. You can begin now.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Good morning to all of the committee members here today. Thank you very much for being here, and thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to present here.

As all of you know, ever since our government has taken office, we've fought to make life easier for drivers. We take that fight seriously, and now, more than ever, eliminating gridlock is crucial to our future success as a province. The fact is, Ontario is growing by at least 200,000 people each year. Families and workers are coming from near and far for better opportunities, to build a better life for themselves and their loved ones, not to sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

By 2051, the greater Golden Horseshoe will have a population of almost 15 million people. Gridlock is already costing our economy \$11 billion a year in lost productivity. We know things will only get worse if we don't take action to build the transportation infrastructure needed to keep people moving across our province, and our government has a plan to do just that. Our Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act features common-sense, forward-thinking measures that, if passed, would allow us to build highways faster so we can get people and goods where they need to go quicker and more efficiently.

Earlier this year, our government tabled the Get It Done Act, which is already helping us accelerate construction on the transit projects that matter most to Ontario workers and families. That legislation is also allowing us to cut through red tape so we can get shovels in the ground quickly on Highway 413, which will save drivers as much as an hour each day during rush hour. That's five more hours each week to spend time with friends and family.

If the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act is passed, it would help build on the success of the Get It Done Act by implementing new measures to fast-track construction of priority highway projects—projects like Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass and the Garden City Skyway bridge twinning.

Critically, this legislation will also bring a common-sense approach to installing bike lanes on city streets to ensure they don't impede the flow of traffic. It would show drivers across the province that we're just as fed up with gridlock as they are and we're not willing to accept the status quo.

If passed, the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would create a new Building Highways Faster Act—BHFA for short—and would allow us to speed up the construction of designated priority highway projects. This would help us move forward to build Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass and the Garden City Skyway bridge much quicker, and any other priority projects designated in the future.

The BHFA would give the province the authority to request timely access to infrastructure, known assets and information so we can get construction under way without unnecessary delays. The legislation would allow us to facilitate 24/7 construction for our priority highway projects, and 24/7 construction is something we've already seen great results with. Since our \$73-million investment to the city of Toronto for the Gardiner Expressway construction, the project is already four months ahead of schedule. That is thanks to the investment under this government on the condition for work to continue on a

24/7, around-the-clock basis as needed. By allowing 24/7 construction on priority projects, we will deliver for the people of Ontario even faster.

The BHFA would streamline property expropriations, create new penalties for obstructing field access and taking possession of crown-owned land, and it would enable us to do everything in our power to take bold action on priority highways that will keep traffic moving for generations to come.

As someone who commutes every single day to Queen's Park, I understand the pain of being stuck in gridlock all too well. There is no worse feeling than being parked on a highway when you should be at work contributing, or spending time with your loved ones. That is why we need to build, and that is why we are building.

We are building Highway 413, a 52-kilometre highway that will connect the regions of York, Peel and Halton to keep traffic moving throughout the GTA. Highway 413 will run from Highway 400 in the east to the Highway 401/Highway 407 interchange in the west. This will save drivers as much as 30 minutes per trip during rush hour. Saving this precious time may seem like a dream today, but that dream will become a reality sooner than expected if this legislation passes.

Importantly, the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would exempt Highway 413 from the Environmental Assessment Act and establish a new accelerated assessment process to evaluate the project's environmental impacts. Preliminary work on Highway 413 could proceed before the accelerated assessment process is completed, saving us valuable time in our fight against gridlock. The Ministry of Transportation would prepare an environmental impact assessment report, summarizing Highway 413's environmental impacts and identifying measures to mitigate those impacts. We will also consult with municipalities, Indigenous communities and members of the public as we move forward to build this critical highway.

0910

Not only will accelerating construction on Highway 413 help us get drivers out of gridlock sooner, but it will give a major boost to our economy. During construction, Highway 413 will support approximately 3,000 jobs, from heavy equipment operators to drilling and coring contractors, concrete workers and steelworkers, utility contractors, laboratory technologists, safety inspectors, environmental specialists, and many, many more. Construction of Highway 413 will contribute \$400 million to Ontario's GDP each year. We'll be getting drivers out of gridlock, supporting economic growth and generating investments in our province by building the transportation infrastructure that businesses and people need to succeed.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, if passed, would also help us accelerate construction on the Bradford Bypass, a 16.3-kilometre freeway that will connect Highway 404 in the east to Highway 400 in the west. The Bradford Bypass will save drivers in Simcoe county and York region up to 35 minutes per trip, alleviating gridlock on one of the most congested highway corridors in North America. Construction of the Bradford

Bypass will support over 2,600 jobs per year and contribute \$274 million to Ontario's GDP annually. We're already making great progress to build the Bradford Bypass, and if the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act passes, it will take our efforts to the next level.

Earlier this year, our government awarded a key contract to manage construction on the west section of the Bradford Bypass. The construction manager will join the existing detail design team to help work through risks and challenges before the start of construction. Crews have already built a new bridge at Simcoe County Road 4 that will keep traffic moving through West Gwillimbury, where the Bradford Bypass is under construction. Work is also under way to build a southbound lane on Highway 400 that will connect to the Bradford Bypass.

If the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act passes, we'll be in an even better position to quickly improve the lives of commuters throughout York and Simcoe for years to come, helping relieve gridlock in the GTA as well.

This legislation would also designate the Garden City Skyway bridge twinning a priority highway project. The Garden City Skyway bridge is used by more than 100,000 vehicles each day, serving as a crucial link between Ontario's international border crossings and the greater Golden Horseshoe. In April, our government issued a request for proposals on the Garden City Skyway bridge twinning project, which involves building a new Toronto-bound bridge across the Welland Canal. Twinning the Garden City Skyway will not only keep traffic moving through a vital trade corridor that plays a key role in driving our economy, but it would also improve accessibility for drivers travelling to Niagara Falls, one of Canada's top tourist destinations, visited by over 10 million travellers from around the globe every year.

When this legislation passes, we'll be one step closer to accelerating work on the Garden City Skyway bridge and alleviating congestion on the QEW.

Unfortunately, drivers in Toronto already face the longest commute times in Canada and the third-longest commutes in the world. This is according to a study by TomTom. Congestion is costing Torontonians 98 hours each year. That is time they could better spend with their families or doing anything other than sitting and being frustrated in traffic. That is also why the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, if passed, would introduce a common-sense approach to building bike lanes, ensuring that they don't come at the cost of making congestion on our city streets even worse.

Our government supports bike lanes that make sense—bike lanes that keep traffic flowing. However, far too often, that just isn't the case. It is time we take a stand for the majority of users on our roadways and Ontario drivers. That means not giving in to the small minority whose goal is to bring the city to a standstill.

This legislation would require municipalities to obtain approval from the province before removing an existing lane of traffic to build a new bike lane. We would establish a process with a clear set of criteria for reviewing municipalities' requests to remove traffic lanes to build those new

bike lanes, including safety, emergency response times and traffic volumes. If we determine that removing existing traffic lanes to build bike lanes will make congestion worse, they will simply not be built.

As part of this process, the province will ask municipalities for data on bike lane projects initiated within the past five years. This data must include how new bike lanes have impacted road capacity, road safety and traffic volume, year-round. We need to apply informed decision-making to the construction of bike lanes based on real statistics and listening to commuters. Too many studies on bike lanes are just conducted on select days, when the weather is just right, failing to account for many variabilities. Bike lanes must be part of the solution to gridlock, not a part of the problem. If the Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act passes, we will put an end to problematic bike lanes once and for all, including those on Yonge Street, Bloor Street and University Avenue.

If you've seen a pattern here, it's that our government won't stand for drivers being left to fend for themselves. That certainly includes when they are in a vulnerable position at the side of a highway. When a driver is involved in a collision or their vehicle breaks down, they should have the confidence of knowing that a qualified and reputable professional will be there to help them with a tow. The last thing they need is to be overcharged or intimidated by tow truck drivers with questionable motives to take advantage of a bad situation.

In 2021, our government launched a tow zone pilot, which created restricted towing zones on four sections of provincial highway in the GTA. Only authorized towing companies are allowed to tow vehicles on these sections of highway, preventing bad actors in the towing industry from taking advantage of drivers and enhancing consumer protection. Since its introduction, drivers across the GTA have benefited from reliable towing services at a reasonable cost. When an Ontario family is stuck on the side of the road and in a time of need, we have a responsibility to stick up for them. The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act would make the tow zone pilot permanent by moving the program under the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act, or TSSEA for short.

In January 2024, the TSSEA created provincial oversight for the towing and vehicle storage industry. It established a certification system for tow operators, tow truck drivers and storage providers to ensure they meet the prescribed requirements and standards for consumer protection.

0920

Thanks to our pilot, clearing vehicles off the highway is now faster than ever, and we are giving our drivers some peace of mind when they're on the road. Vehicle clearance standards have been met more than 95% of the time. Less than 1% of drivers who have received a tow through the pilot program lodged a complaint.

The success is clear; making this program permanent is a no-brainer. This is another step forward, improving road safety and enhancing consumer protection as we carry out our vision to build a safer Ontario for everyone.

Saving Ontarians their hard-earned money has always been a priority for our government and our Premier. That means keeping costs down for our hundreds of thousands of drivers.

In 2020, our government implemented a freeze on fees for driver knowledge tests and road tests. That move has saved Ontarians \$35 million to date, and we want to keep that coming.

If passed, this act would enshrine the current fees for knowledge tests and road tests in legislation. Currently, the province is required to increase driver testing fees based on CPI. Our legislation would remove that, and future fee increases would require a legislative change. Maintaining the fee freeze will help save Ontarians \$72 million this decade. It would also help ensure drivers continue to enjoy predictable and affordable costs for years to come.

This legislation would build on the success of the Get It Done Act, which froze fees for drivers' licences and Ontario photo cards, because our government will never stop working to make life more affordable. Hard-working Ontarians deserve to keep their money, and we want to support them in supporting their families.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act isn't the only way we are looking to fight gridlock. We are investing \$28 billion over the next decade to build highways, roads and bridges that will keep traffic moving and drive our economy forward as our population continues to grow. The projects I've mentioned today, like the 413, the Bradford Bypass and the Skyway bridge, will connect communities and give the province much-needed relief to congested trade corridors and ensure drivers have more time to spend with their families each day.

We simply cannot afford to waste any more time delayed in needless red tape. We need shovels in the ground, not more studies. We've already seen what happens when there's too much red tape. For Highway 413, I've reviewed environmental assessments from June 2007, public consultations from April 2009 and 230-page reports from December 2010, and the list goes on.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: But after two decades the only thing that has changed is that traffic is significantly worse. We need to learn from the past and build for the future.

With this legislation, we're saying no to gridlock and standing up for drivers across the province. We're making sure that drivers who have been involved in a collision or broken down on a highway in the GTA aren't taken advantage of in their time of need.

We're continuing to build on the success of the Get It Done Act, which has helped us slash the red tape and get to work on projects that matter most. It will allow us to roll up our sleeves and get to work on priority projects like the 413, Bradford Bypass and the Garden City Skyway bridge and bring some relief to Toronto drivers.

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

We'll now move to this round of questions, with the official opposition to start. MPP—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Excuse me—sorry.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Do you have a point of order?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, I do. Sorry.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McMahon has a point of order.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My friendly colleague is here with us today, Aislinn Clancy, MPP for the Green Party, Kitchener Centre. She's an independent like me, and normally, we're sharing time, which we're happy to do in this House. We get along—try to get along, everyone.

I'd really like to ask that she share my time with me today, the independent time. Is that asking for unanimous consent?

I would like to ask for unanimous consent that we allow a member, who was duly elected in Kitchener Centre, her voice for her residents and for Ontarians to speak. I am willing to share my limited, limited time with MPP Clancy.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, MPP McMahon. It is not a valid point of order. This bill is time-allocated, and we have to abide by that motion. I will repeat again: I have to bring the gavel down at 10 o'clock this morning.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, she's sharing my time, so I'm giving her my 4.5 minutes.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Just to reinforce what I think the Clerk has maybe already told you: In the bill, it is just the independent member on the committee, which is you, MPP McMahon. I'm sorry, Ms. Clancy, but that is the direct wording in the time allocation motion.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do we vote on unanimous consent?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We cannot vote on unanimous consent at this point.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Can I challenge the Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The House is the main thing. Committees are subordinate to what the motion says in the House that was passed. That is the bottom line.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Who do I speak to about that?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Well, you can take your time if you want the standing orders, but it is the motion that was passed in the House, which is supreme. We are subordinate as committees.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I feel that's wrong, very wrong.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. MPP Harden, it is going to be your time, but I am going to say, pursuant to standing order 22, the use of laptops, tablets and smart phones is permitted in committee rooms provided they are not used as a prop. You have your screen up facing the audience; I'm asking you to turn it or close it. Thank you very much.

MPP Harden, would you like to start with your first—

Mr. Joel Harden: Are my seven minutes starting right now, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes.

Mr. Joel Harden: I think it's fitting that we begin this morning's discussion from the opposition with the silencing of one of our colleagues, because that's endemic with this bill today. The bill has absolutely no evidence behind it to suggest to any commuter that this bill will make life easier, that it will reduce congestion. That's disappointing. It's disappointing that we begin the day on a note of silencing the member for Kitchener Centre, and that we have not heard a shred of evidence from the minister about how this bill will actually accomplish what he claims it will accomplish.

I have a simple yes or no question to begin with, Minister: Are you aware of the fact that a major reason why communities are building active transportation lanes is to reduce injuries and fatalities? Yes or no?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Look, I appreciate that safety is foremost for all of us as we build out transportation in the province—

Mr. Joel Harden: Chair, I'm going to reclaim my time. It was a simple question of yes or no. The minister is a very skilled orator, but I asked him a very simple question of yes or no. I'm going to assume, given the minister's intellect and his ability in this House, that he knows the answer to that question is yes.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Harden, it is your time, but you did ask a question.

MPP Harden, continue.

Mr. Joel Harden: My next question to the minister is: Were you aware that yesterday was the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims—people who have been injured or killed in communities in our province and around the world? I'll note for the record that the United Nations has sanctioned this day. We had a large rally outside Queen's Park yesterday of over 300 people, many of whom were grieving their family members, critically injured or killed.

Jess Spieker, who will be deputing to this committee later today, Minister, was one of those people who was there. She noted for the crowd that was outside our doors yesterday that since 2006, 1,018 people have been killed in the city of Toronto—killed.

I'm asking you again, as a yes or no question: Do you consider it to be a priority of your government and of this bill to reduce unnecessary road violence in this community and around Ontario? Yes or no, sir?

0930

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: MPP Harden, absolutely. When it comes to safety, that's been a priority for this government. We have done that through multiple pieces of legislation. Some pieces of legislation are before the House today; some have passed through this House as well, including the MOMS Act, which brought in some of the toughest penalties for those driving carelessly across our province—

Mr. Joel Harden: Chair, I'm going to reclaim my time. Again, Minister, I know you're good on your feet, but that's not an answer to the question. I appreciate the fact—

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:—so we want to make sure that we are always—

Mr. Joel Harden: You can talk over me as much as you want, but this is my time. I'm speaking.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: You can let me answer. If you don't want to let me answer, that's fine.

Mr. Joel Harden: You didn't answer, in fact. The question is simple: Is the government's priority to reduce injuries or deaths in our streets? There is nothing in Bill 212 that accomplishes that. In fact, Minister, it is quite the opposite, and we are going to be hearing that at committee today.

I want to point people—because the Chair and the Clerk have said I'm not allowed to show photographic images, and certainly the member for Perth–Wellington was loud in voicing his opposition that we can't bring the faces of people who have been critically injured or killed. So I'm going to point people watching online and people in this room to visit my website, which is joelhardenmpp.ca; click the “update” tab and you will see images of people there. One of the images that you will see there is Alex Amaro, a 23-year-old former journalism student who was killed after two cars collided with her right outside Dufferin Mall in this city. Alex's family, Minister, has made a public appeal to you through the press and through a letter, and I want to read that appeal and get your reaction to it this morning.

They write, “Minister Sarkaria, you say that this bike-lane legislation is about giving people more time with their families. Our family would give anything to have more time with Alex—to hug her, to speak with her, to celebrate birthdays and life milestones, to see what a difference she would be making in this world today.”

Minister, you've not responded to the Amaro family's appeals. They were here outside of the Legislature yesterday. Can you explain to them how removing protective infrastructure which might have saved Alex's life is a good move for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: MPP Harden, obviously, very unfortunate what has happened to that family and that loss that they have experienced. Everything the Ministry of Transportation and our government does, whether it be through legislative measures, is to improve safety on our roads.

What we're saying here is—we're not saying no bike lanes—take them to secondary streets, less busier streets, where people can commute to work using their bikes. There is no issue with that at all. Safety is important. Take them off some of our busiest streets, where we have thousands—

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm going to reclaim my time, Chair. Thank you, Minister.

What I want to say on behalf of the Amaro family this morning, sir, is that your legislation you have on the table here, right now, would ask municipalities to seek your approval first before engaging in infrastructure that has

been planned by certified professionals to prevent injuries and deaths.

I want to point people watching this stream—and people in this room can go to joelhardennmpp.ca/updates and see the images on faces of road violence—to the next one I'd like to point you to: Ali Sezgin Armagan, a food delivery worker who was killed this summer while bringing food. Probably a lot like all of us, after a long day here, we'll be ordering some food, and someone like Ali is going to be bringing it to us. He was killed in an area where Toronto has seen three deaths of people.

If protected bike lane infrastructure were to be enhanced on Avenue Road, Minister, they would have to seek your permission first, despite the fact that the city of Toronto has certified professionals that can give it advice on how to reduce critical injuries or deaths.

Mr. Armagan's sister, who welcomed him from Turkey, is still grieving. She cannot sleep at night. She's torn apart, she has told me, because of this horrific accident. The gentleman responsible has been charged by police, but I think of this dump truck driver too, who had a difficult time seeing Mr. Armagan.

Can you explain to me why preventing protected infrastructure that might have saved Mr. Armagan—can you explain to me how you know better than the city of Toronto for matters like that?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: What we are saying is take the bike lanes that remove a lane of vehicles on some of our busiest roads, not only in Toronto but in all of North America, and let's move those lanes to secondary streets where it's safer, where there's less traffic, less volume on our roads as we move forward.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm going to reclaim my time, given that I have about 30 seconds left. Minister, what you're effectively saying to vulnerable road users in the province of Ontario is that you do not care about them—

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Absolutely not.

Mr. Joel Harden: —because they continue to get critically injured or killed—

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Everything we have done through legislation has been to make it safer for people in this province.

Mr. Joel Harden: —at a rate of 134 people a day, 49,106 incidents in 2023 by the minister's own statistics. You have said very loudly and clearly that you do not care about them this morning, and that is a shame.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We're over.

We'll now move to the independent member, MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. We're not off to a good start when a member, one of our colleagues, cannot share her voice and the voice of her community this morning. That has to change, and I will be figuring out how to do that.

I biked here. I biked here safely this morning, and I did that because I was in a bike lane. I biked along the Danforth, down Sherbourne and across Wellesley. It was much safer for me because it was a bike lane, and I felt

that. So did other people in that bike lane, including a family that was in front of me, randomly—a beautiful family: mom, dad and maybe an eight-year-old. They were all wearing bright-coloured jackets, and they told me that their son has been biking since he was four; he's eight. That's how that family is getting here safely: in a bike lane.

All I'm hearing from you today, Minister, is everything about people who drive. I'm not hearing about the other constituents in Ontario, which is people who walk, people who take transit, people who choose to ride a bike. It is their prerogative to choose how they get to and from home safely.

All that to say, my first question is, do you honest-to-God believe that the congestion in our cities—in Toronto especially—in Ontario is caused solely by bike lanes?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: On the three lanes that we're focusing on—Yonge Street, University Avenue and Bloor Street—we have seen a significant increase in congestion. We see that; you can drive along those any single day. It doesn't make sense to remove two lanes, 50% of the road capacity to accommodate—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, so you're saying—yes or no. I only have four and a half minutes, and I haven't even timed myself.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have three minutes left.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay.

You're saying bike lanes are a cause of congestion, in your opinion. But what about construction? This is a graph of the construction projects in Toronto. Metrolinx is the culprit of traffic congestion, accounting for 42% of road closures in our city—Metrolinx, which hasn't even opened up an alternative mode of transportation, the Eglinton Crosstown, for 14 years now we're on. For God's sake. I lived in Japan; that would have been done in three. What are you doing to curtail Metrolinx. If you're interested in ripping out bike lanes, what are you doing about Metrolinx and bringing them under control?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We're building world-class transit, \$70 billion over the next 10 years—

Interjection.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: And do you know why? Because for 15 years, your government did absolutely nothing to build public transit in this province. We've got shovels in the ground on the Ontario Line that will move 400,000 people a day.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right, next question. Tick tock—we're waiting for Eglinton.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: MPP Harden laughs over there, but he's voted against every single one of those public transportation projects.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Next question.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: You guys don't want to see anything built in this province, just oppose.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. I reclaim my time.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'll just ask for one person at a time to speak, please, at committee, so let's just be respectful of each other.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes. And I have the floor.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you feel spending \$48 million to rip out bike lanes in downtown Toronto is a good use of Ontario taxpayers' dollars? Should someone in Sarnia, someone in Stratford, someone in Brampton, someone in Trenton be paying for this unnecessary overreach of this provincial government?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: What I can tell you is that gridlock costs this province \$11 billion a year. Torontonians lose 98 hours a year to gridlock, being stuck behind the wheel. And I can also tell you, when Jarvis Street bike lanes were removed, it only cost the city \$300,000; Brimley Road, \$800,000—countless other examples, MPP McMahon. But I think we need to get this province moving, and we need to get this city moving.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: But do your residents want you using their money to do this?

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And I will look over at the other side at my colleagues: MPP Bresee, former mayor of Loyalist township; MPP Kanapathi, former Markham councillor; MPP Sandhu, former Brampton city councillor. Do you not feel, talking to your colleagues, that this is huge provincial overreach into municipalities? When they were leaders in their municipalities, do you think that they would want you meddling?

0940

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I think it's important for the province to get people moving. Gridlock is a huge issue across the province, and it results in lost productivity. Let's get people moving. Let's not rip up some of our busiest roads, not only just in Toronto but in North America, to accommodate a very small—

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

We'll now move on to the government side for their round of questioning. MPP Kanapathi, please begin.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Minister, for your detailed presentation, and thank you, Minister, for your leadership and taking the gridlock fight seriously. Really, we are fighting gridlock seriously, and thank you for that. Thank you for your leadership and thank you to our government.

I have to tell you, every day, six years as an MPP, coming from Markham—I had to put my car on the road at 6 o'clock this morning, because coming from Major Mac, taking the 404 all the way to the Don Valley—15, 20 minutes. But from the 401 to the Don Valley Parkway to reach Queen's Park—12 kilometres—takes 45 minutes to one hour. When you talk about gridlock—we could talk about it the whole year, Minister, for that gridlock. Gridlock and congestion is not only costing money, it's

costing a lot of money to our economy and the quality of life of the people.

I know your fight against gridlock and getting drivers out of gridlock are serious things to do in Ontario. Thank you for taking that fight seriously, putting this important bill into reality.

My question to you, Minister: Explain the impact gridlock is having on our economy and on the quality of life of Ontarians.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, MPP Kanapathi. I want to thank you for your advocacy.

Look, when we talk about reducing gridlock, there are many avenues to that. The opposition, whether it be the NDP or Liberals, did absolutely nothing for 15 years. They sat on their hands. They have opposed every single public transportation project that this province has put forward. They vote against every single one of those projects when we bring them forward through the fall economic statement or the budget.

I want to thank you for your championing of the Yonge North subway extension. I know when you were a councillor, you were a huge advocate and champion of that project. Looking at that project just today—28,000 people will be within a 10-minute walking distance of public transit once that project is built.

So when we talk about congestion, we look at a variety of fixes to it and things that we can do to make it better. When we talk about this piece of legislation—very similar to what we did with the Building Transit Faster Act, which allowed us to get shovels in the ground on the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension and many of our other LRT projects, which—I have to note, every one of those acceleration methods that we put forward through legislation, the NDP and Liberals actually voted against. Can you believe that? We're talking about congestion—all-time congestion. You've got members of the opposition that can leave their political stripes behind and say, "Let's fight for good public transit in this province," and what do they do? They vote against accelerating the construction of public transit in this province. They're complaining about building in the city of Toronto.

For 10, 15, 20-plus years, we've seen previous governments talk about building transit but do absolutely nothing. They just want to study it, keep studying it—don't do anything else, just study it, study it, study it. But what we've been able to accomplish as a province is \$70 billion in public transit over the next 10 years, something that no other jurisdiction in North America has even come close to or will see.

I referenced in my earlier remarks to the member of the NDP and the independent member: The Ontario Line, the downtown relief line, is going to move 400,000 people a day—28,000 cars off the road with that line once it's operational. That's what success looks like when we talk about public transit and building for the future.

You look at this piece of legislation that we have. When we talk about gridlock, when we talk about productivity, we're looking at ways to get shovels in the ground faster

on those highway projects. The Liberals and NDP have both been very clear: They don't want to build Highway 413. But they couldn't be more far removed from reality, because we know how important those highways are not only for the productivity of this province but for the next 10, 20, 30 years and what it will mean for the people in this province that can get to their families 30 minutes each way faster—spend five hours more with their families a week, travelling the 413 once it's complete—making sure that when the Bradford Bypass is complete, it is 35 minutes faster and saved each way.

These are critical, critical projects and if we look at how fast our population is growing, we have to be more productive as a province. We have to be able to get to where we need to go faster and quicker. We've attracted billions and billions of dollars worth of jobs, and we need to continue building on that with even better infrastructure across the province.

So thank you for all your advocacy on it, and thank you for all your work on it. Let's keep building, and let's not listen to the opposition who want nothing built in this province, who want to just study projects and do nothing for public transit.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. You talk about red tape and the bureaucracy delaying most of that project. Could you explain moving and tackling red tape and gridlock in Ontario? Could you explain that more in detail?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A minute and 30 seconds left.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Look, the other key part of this is—when we talk about gridlock, when we talk about traffic in the city of Toronto—I think, what we've seen is an explosion of bike lanes across this province during the pandemic. We've seen traffic get even worse across Ontario, and we've seen a very small minority of people—for example, take the next couple of months: You've got December, you've got January, you've got February, some of the coldest months in Ontario and much of North America. We know that those lanes are not going to be the most travelled, we know less people are going to be on bikes, so it doesn't make sense that we rip up 50% of our infrastructure. Just take a look at Bloor Street. You have four lanes, you've ripped up a lane on each side—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: There's a subway underneath it.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: There is a subway underneath, absolutely. Thank you for that.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McMahon, come on. No heckling.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: They've removed two lanes to accommodate a very small percentage of the population—poorly used bike lanes in those areas. So let's have some common sense when we're making these decisions. We're not anti-bike lane, it just does not make sense to rip up—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:—some of our busiest roads not only in Ontario but in North America to accommodate a very small percentage of people—1%—that are travelling by bike.

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

We'll now move on to the official opposition: MPP French.

And MPP McMahon, I would just ask you to keep your voice down when other people are speaking. Thank you.

MPP French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Minister, for your presentation. I think I'll stay in the bike lane for a little bit.

Municipalities know how to plan and they plan what they know, which is their communities, so why should municipalities have their decisions overruled?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Look, we've seen gridlock get to an all-time high here in the province, so what we are saying is we want to know how those decisions are being made with respect to bike lanes.

So we were asking, when a lane of traffic is being removed, that they seek that permission from the province.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: This bill only focuses on motor vehicle traffic, not overall traffic, and as it's written, this bill would ban even well-used bike lanes because the bike traffic isn't considered. Does that make sense?

And also, will this ministry provide the evidence—not only anecdotes, but the evidence—to back up its claims that bike lanes are impeding overall traffic?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: So the three lanes that we've targeted—University, Yonge and Bloor, off the top—those are the three lanes where we're going to move forward with removal on right away.

To your question, with respect to usage, I think all you have to do is stand outside and we can all see for ourselves how it doesn't make sense to rip up some of our busiest roads in North America for a very small percentage of people. We need to get this province moving. We need to get people moving. That's exactly what we want to see happen through this piece of legislation.

0950

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Those are the kinds of comments that I would call anecdotal.

Certainly, when I have been sitting, stuck in vehicle traffic, watching the bikes zipping by me safely in the bike lane infrastructure, if I were to do a quick count, there's a lot more of them zipping by my window than cars. So, anecdotally, I would say that they are well utilized. But I was hoping for actual evidence, especially considering the cost and the endeavour here that the government is setting forward to do, which is rip out existing infrastructure.

Minister, you talked about safety. I will point out that in the changes proposed to the bike lanes in schedule 4 of this bill, nowhere is the word "safety" a part of that section. Why is motor vehicle traffic flow the only consideration mentioned for approving new bike lanes, and why isn't safety included in the bill?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Safety is always the topmost priority for the MTO as we do our work. That is

seen through a lot of how we design roads, how we design highways, how we design transit projects. We have passed significant pieces of legislation before this House, that many of you have also supported and seen as well, to ensure that we remain the safest jurisdiction in North America, as we continue to do that.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Certainly, municipalities planning for the safety of their communities, as we've said, shouldn't be having their decisions overridden when they do know their communities.

But to your point about designing roads with safety in mind, I am going to read a tweet from Ben Spurr. Folks would be familiar with his voice on safety. "The provincial legislation will require cities to demonstrate that bike lanes that remove car lanes won't have an adverse impact on vehicle traffic. The point of the Parkside bike lanes is to slow car traffic. There have been almost 1,500 crashes there in 10 years, and three deaths."

It's a good point. Bike lanes are sometimes installed as traffic-calming measures, with the specific goal of increasing safety by reducing vehicle volumes and speeds. This bill before us would create red tape for traffic-calming measures.

So, to your own point about designing roads with safety in mind and building infrastructure with safety in mind, traffic-calming measures ensure that people are safer. Why is that being thrown out with this legislation?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Safety is always considered in any of our decisions. Nothing of that suggestion is being thrown out. But what I can take from some of your comments there is you just don't want cars to move in this city, and I think that is the core of the problem.

You want to cause congestion. You want to make it busier for people to get around in the city. That's why the status quo just isn't working. That's why we're stepping in to reduce that gridlock. That's why we're stepping in to challenge that, because we've seen gridlock get to an all-time high and something that just isn't working for the city.

Talk to the residents of Etobicoke. Talk to the residents of Toronto who travel these roads every single day.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, Minister, I look forward to hearing the deputations today. My colleague and I have had a Zoom town hall where we heard from people who use bike lanes, whether they be cyclists, whether they be wheelchair users. There are various vehicles—is "vehicle" the right word—anyway, various people are using those bike lanes to travel safely. You and I can agree to disagree, but I do think that the deputations that we hear on this bill will be important. I wish the ministry folks were paying attention to their voices.

You said that you are listening to commuters. Do you consider cyclists and active transportation users commuters?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Absolutely. That's why we're saying we're not against bike lanes. We're saying there is a reasonable approach to bike lanes. No one is saying there won't be bike lanes in this province anymore—not on the main arterial roads that are the busiest

in this province. There are other ways that you can get to where you need to go through protected modes of transportation—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: You raise a point that is interesting, because one of the questions that we had heard from concerned active transportation folks is they don't know what these secondary streets—what these are, where these are, these magic bypasses to arterial roads.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: They don't exist, or they would be being used.

By ripping out the bike lanes and abandoning safe infrastructure for active transportation, I think you're going to find that people still use those arterial roads, and now we're going to have carnage on our streets, and I would say that that is at this ministry's and this minister's feet. It's your decision. Instead of protecting people, you are going to leave them even more vulnerable.

Do you have thoughts on that, Minister?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We have the toughest rules on, whether it be careless driving, other measures in this province—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Nope. Sorry. I understand that I'm being rude and talking over you, but careless driving—people plead down. Cops can't just throw a "careless" charge because they feel like it; it has to be borne out. That is not a penalty that exists—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. MPP McMahon, you have the remaining time.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm asking a question on behalf of my colleague MPP Aislinn Clancy of Kitchener Centre, who is being muzzled today in committee for some reason.

Ryan Amato was asked to move the highway north by the Premier, from the original—I don't know—thoughts and route, so this is going to be built near an underutilized highway, the 407.

I want to know, who owns the land, and what do they have to gain? Why was Ryan asked to move the route of the highway north?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: MPP McMahon, I can only comment on the process of the detail design, which is done by the team at MTO and engineers and experts. We design a highway in the safest way possible. We design a highway in the most efficient way possible. That is left to the experts at the Ministry of Transportation, and their years and years of experience.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Who owns the land, though?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The land on which the 413 will be built is owned by thousands of different people.

As you would know, anytime you build a public transit project, anytime you build a highway, it's built on the land—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Is Ryan Amato one of the experts? He's an expert?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: MPP McMahon, what I hope you can understand is that building highways

requires us to acquire land which it's done on—whether it be public transit projects, highway projects across this province—and that process will be followed, as it has been in the thousands of other projects that we have done at the Ministry of Transportation.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What's your reasoning for avoiding the environmental assessments for Highway 413? Are you worried about protecting the 29 federally listed endangered species? Are you thinking that those endangered species will impede the construction of this unnecessary highway?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I think it's important to note that assessments on this have been conducted for the past 20-plus years. As I referenced in my remarks, MPP McMahon—2007 environmental assessment, public consultations for 2009 and many other reports, so on.

I think it truly underscores the reason why your government, in the past, never built anything in this province. You refused to build. You just wanted to study, study, study.

We're the government of action—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'll ask the next question, because I'm running out of time.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Also, when you say "previous government," the previous government is you, actually, for six years. But that's another story.

Minister, I'm sure you respect doctors, and you're probably worried sick about the 19,000 residents in your riding of Brampton South who are without a family doctor. I'm wondering if you could share—

Mr. Matthew Rae: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McMahon, there's a point of order on the floor.

MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: MPP McMahon has limited time, and she's choosing to use that time to talk about something that's not part of the bill.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, it's medical if—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): No. Hold on.

It's not a point of order—I have to rule.

MPP McMahon, you need to speak to the bill before us.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, I'm getting there—patience, grasshopper.

I'm wondering if you can share your thoughts on the letter from 122 ER doctors—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. It's 10 o'clock.

Thanks, Minister, for appearing before committee.

We're going to be recessed till 1 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1000 to 1300.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good afternoon. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to resume public hearings on Bill 212, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various Acts with respect to highways, broadband-related expropriation and other transportation-related matters.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Seeing none, today's presenters have been scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot, with each presenter allotted seven minutes for an opening statement, followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent member of the committee.

ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES
OF ONTARIO
BLOOR ANNEX BIA
GOOD ROADS

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We will now ask the first group of presenters for this afternoon to come forward: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Bloor Annex Business Improvement Area and Good Roads association.

I'll ask everyone who starts a presentation if you'd start off with your name for recording purposes.

Association of Municipalities of Ontario, you can begin.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Thank you, and good afternoon. My name is Brian Rosborough. I'm the executive director of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I am joined virtually today by my colleague Karen Nesbitt. She's the senior manager of policy in AMO's policy centre. We appreciate the invitation to be with you today.

I'll be speaking mainly about the aspects of Bill 212 pertaining to bicycle lanes.

Based on local knowledge and community input, municipalities develop transportation plans that balance traffic flow with other priorities such as active transportation, multimodal transportation and environmental health and protection. Bike lanes play a critical role in urban planning.

I think we've all acknowledged that congestion is a challenge in large municipalities. While much of it stems from a historical lack of comprehensive transit options and investments, primarily due to changing provincial and federal focus, what matters is that we all agree today that congestion can impact local economic development and one's quality of life, and that it should be addressed.

However, the notion that removing bike lanes will result in improvements to congestion is a narrow argument. That theory assumes that more roads will improve congestion and that bike lanes create congestion. In fact, studies have shown that more roads can result in congestion as it increases demand for expanded use.

Conversely, there's significant data that shows that creating bike lanes helps increase the number of cyclists, removing cars from the roads and helping reduce congestion, along with improving road safety and reducing carbon emissions.

The province's proposal to remove and block bike lanes in specific locations is misguided and will be ineffective.

No single road improvement or isolated project can effectively address congestion. Transportation planning is built on an understanding of the connections of the entire network for all users. For example, many rely on bikes to connect to transit or run local errands, and they should be able to rely on bike lanes as a safe way to travel.

Developing a balanced, diverse transportation network that considers the evolving needs of a community is a crucial planning exercise that includes a mix of roads, cycling paths, sidewalks, trails and public transit options. Moreover, it's an exercise best left to municipalities, who base it on their long-standing understanding of the local infrastructure they manage and build, along with how it fits in their long-term growth plans.

Setting aside the fact that these changes will create extra costs for taxpayers, both to remove existing infrastructure and to add another layer of bureaucracy for marginal benefit, does anyone really believe that removing the identified bike lanes will significantly address the complex challenge of congestion in communities like Toronto, or that adding another layer of review from the provincial government, whose expertise is best suited for large-scale projects such as expanding the GO service or significant capital transit investments or overseeing Ontario's highways, will help congestion in cities? Probably not.

That leaves a choice for policy-makers: Do you approve a framework that will inefficiently target one small aspect of transportation planning, or do you engage in a constructive discussion about how we tackle transportation together?

AMO is very open to that discussion with the province. In fact, AMO is calling on the province to sit down with municipalities to explore how best the services that Ontarians rely on most can be delivered more effectively or affordably and more sustainably. That includes an opportunity to better understand how as partners we can make the necessary investments in infrastructure to support growth; to maintain about half a trillion dollars' worth of existing infrastructure owned by municipalities; and ensure that the impacts of climate change are factored into protecting Ontario's economic, social and environmental infrastructure.

AMO estimates that Ontario municipalities are planning to invest more than \$250 billion in essential infrastructure over the next 10 years, and more than \$100 billion of that is to support growth. This includes making modifications to or building new roads and bridges, sidewalks, bike lanes that offer a choice to Ontarians and work together with a world-class transit system as a network that connects people to work, to home and to recreation.

But we can't do it alone. The province has an important part to play. We certainly can't do it with policies designed to reduce our capacity for local transportation planning and infrastructure. Success at tackling problems like congestion is dependent on partnership with all orders of government.

AMO is confident the government of Ontario will answer our call for social and economic prosperity review to ensure that communities in every part of Ontario have access to a productive and sustainable infrastructure and a quality of life that can be the envy of North America. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now move to the Bloor Annex Business Improvement Area. Just, again, state your name before you begin. You can start now.

Mr. Brian Burchell: I'm Brian Burchell. I'm the general manager of the Bloor Annex BIA. I want to thank the standing committee for giving us an opportunity to share concerns regarding Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act.

I'm here to talk about the impact that bike lanes have had within the Bloor Annex BIA, but before I do, I want to state for the record how reckless it is for the government to enact legislation empowering itself to remove bike lanes without any evidence that they contribute to traffic congestion. I've met with Ministry of Transportation staff. My take-away is that they are still in data-gathering mode, trying to find a set of facts that fit the "problem" to which the Premier already "knows in his gut" is the solution.

If anything, the available data tells a very different story. For example, the Canadian Automobile Association commissioned CPCS, a Canadian-based international transportation consulting firm, to examine best practices to ease congestion. In their report, they made several recommendations, including improving traffic management systems and traffic incident management; collecting better data to inform innovative solutions; and, yes, invest in relatively low-cost solutions like bike-sharing, bicycle infrastructure, carpooling and ride-sharing. In fact, the report says that collisions and breakdowns are the leading cause of traffic congestion, and the way we respond to these incidents can have a profound impact.

The Toronto Region Board of Trade Congestion Task Force echoes this in their Congestion: What's at Stake in the Toronto Mayoral 2023 By-election guide. It states that "mayoral candidates must be able to pursue solutions that ... help ease the pressure points across our transportation network including: improving traffic management systems, bringing our roads to good repair, seeking to upload costly regional expressways, better utilization of bike lanes and more thoughtful construction planning that ensures viable traffic detours." The data is out there.

In the Bloor Annex BIA, we are dedicated to providing our membership with data-driven and evidence-based decisions. That's why in 2015, when the city of Toronto proposed installing a bike lane as a pilot project on our stretch of Bloor from University Avenue to Shaw, the Bloor Annex BIA in partnership with the city, the Korea Town BIA and the Metcalf Foundation commissioned the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation, TCAT, to investigate the economic impacts—positive, negative or neutral—of the bike lanes as well as the effect of traffic patterns and attitudes of visitors and merchants alike. This

academic-level study included baseline data that was obtained pre-pilot from 2015, with another sample taken as the pilot concluded in 2016 within both the Bloor Annex and Korea Town BIAs. Data was also collected along a comparable section of Danforth, which was used as a control.

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To ensure impartial data collection, TCAT partnered with researchers from the University of Toronto. The study found that in Bloor-Annex, just looking at the economic data during the pilot, customers numbering more than 100 per day in the Annex went from 46% to 62% compared to pre-pilot. The number of customers who spent \$100 or more went from 44% to 53%. The percentage of customers who arrived pre-pilot was 7%; that rose, perhaps ironically, to 9% during the pilot.

Moneris data, which is a sales terminal provider, localized to our area demonstrated a net increase in sales of 3% during the pilot, and vacancy data remained flat, at seven over 133 storefronts, or approximately 5%.

From a safety perspective, conflicts between all road users decreased by 44%. Conflicts between motorized vehicles decreased by 71%. Bike-motorized vehicle conflicts decreased by 61%. Pedestrian-motorized vehicle conflicts decreased by 55%.

After we received all this positive data, both in terms of safety metrics, but most importantly for our needing the economic data, the net benefit for our members, we supported the permanent installation of bike lanes. It's been almost 10 years.

The bike lanes have now become an integral part of our complete main street. It has helped transform our area into a vibrant, green, welcoming business district. This has included creating and enhancing public spaces, like award-winning parkettes and removing cement tree boxes to increase the width of the pedestrian thoroughfare and replacing them with 40 street trees. We supported the installation of the bike lanes, were a participant in the design and we added 30% more bicycle spaces. We needed them to accommodate the customers.

Eight years later, we're seeing on our main street an inclusive retail area that supports 270 small businesses; a main street that's welcoming to all, whether people ride by bike, foot, public transit or car. Women are 50% more likely to bike on Bloor; elderly, children, whole families all feel safer and are coming to Bloor more frequently. Toronto works because it's a collection of neighbourhoods and main street strips that make these areas livable. The businesses provide the amenities that make all this work. We're not a freeway, but a village.

Based on the evidence we've seen, removing bike lanes on our stretch of Bloor and disconnecting it from a Toronto cycling network would only undo this complete-street work we've been fostering, and make the road more dangerous for all road users and increase congestion.

I urge you to look at the data and reconsider Bill 212. Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We'll now move on to Good Roads. Just state your name before you begin, please.

Mr. Scott Butler: My name is Scott Butler. I'm the executive director at Good Roads. Since 1894, we have been about all things roads. We are the original municipal association in this province, the original active transportation association in this province and the original agricultural association in this province. We began as an unholy alliance of cyclists and farmers intent on making getting around much easier, which I think aligns with the aspirations of this bill, and that's about where we're going to stop with the commonality.

I provide these remarks recognizing that the Supreme Court of Canada has firmly established the province has the right to weigh into the municipal realm and to provide dictates about how municipalities should be doing things; however, that decision to impose the province's will into the municipal sphere should be accompanied by clarity and by reason. I think by those two measures, Bill 212 comes up short.

Good Roads was pleased with Minister Sarkaria's comments in the Toronto Star editorial, where he stated that, "In short, what we need is a common-sense, evidence-based bike lane policy..." He concluded his editorial by saying, "Bike lanes are a part of the solution when it comes to getting people moving." We couldn't agree more as an association.

The minister's editorial indicated that the government understands the import of cycling facilities, and I think I would like to suggest that rather than thinking of these as cycling facilities or erroneously thinking of them as causes of congestion, we're better served by acknowledging them for what they are, which is, namely, a reallocation of risk within the roadway, and understanding them to be tools that allow the most vulnerable road users to be afforded the best protections that engineering allows.

When you make this mind shift, this aligns cycling facilities and road stewardship with long-standing Ontario traditions that make sure everyone gets home safely at the end of the day. In 1959, when the arena roof collapsed in Listowel, the Ontario building code came into effect. In 2000, when the Walkerton water tragedy took place, there was a massive overhaul in terms of how the professionals on our water system were trained and we actually apportioned personal liability to elected officials who oversaw those systems. In 2003, the Aylmer meat crisis led to an expansion of meat inspection. If we think about this, the installation of cycling facilities across the province actually fits into that broader narrative, that broader sort of tradition and that broader sort of arc. When we combine that with Bill 212, there is an urgent need to get this right, because what we're doing is making sections of the road more dangerous for people who are currently using them.

Recognizing, like Minister Sarkaria, that the importance of cycling infrastructure is to get Ontario moving, we think it's incumbent upon the Ministry of Transportation to identify where they intend to replace those existing

facilities. We're talking about 11 kilometres of facilities identified in the draft regulation and the province needs to show us where they think those facilities should be moved to. I can't overstate how important this is, since the bill implies that complying with existing provincial standards and specifications—in this case, Ontario Traffic Manual 18, which is designed to provide guidance in terms of the design and installation of cycling facilities and was approved by the provincial government in 2021—seems to no longer be sufficient to be compliant with the ministry's expectations.

So again, recognizing this need for a common-sense, evidence-based approach to bike policy, the Ministry of Transportation should employ its authority within schedule 2 of the proposed bill to identify where those replacement avenues will be, declare them priority highway projects under the act when it's enacted and allow them to be constructed rapidly, with minimal effect to congestion—we already are talking about streets that have less congestion on them—and only then should those existing facilities be removed. We believe the cost for this should be borne by the province; it's only fair and I think it's consistent with other examples where the province has weighed in on the typical infrastructure domain of municipalities. Congestion is a real thing. We need to get moving forward with this; we don't want to fall into the tempting habit of decision-based evidence-making. None of us can afford that.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for your presentations.

We will now begin the rounds of questioning with the official opposition. MPP Bell, please begin.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to all of you for coming in, as well as the work that you do to ensure our streets are safe and our roads are well-maintained.

My first question is to Brian Burchell from the Bloor Annex BIA. I was really struck by the evidence that the BIA has gathered to identify how bike lanes have increased safety, they've motivated more people, including women and children and seniors, to bike and they've also had a net positive impact on business.

Can you talk a little bit about what you personally have noticed and what businesses have said to you personally about the installation of bike lanes and how it's improved or changed the Annex area?

Mr. Brian Burchell: Thank you, Ms. Bell. I believe that the ergonomics of stopping to shop from a bike is just so much easier that it's slowed the whole process down, so people will just drift off to a side street and park their bike because they saw something in the window. They don't have to find a car parking spot. They don't have to pay for a car parking spot. They've got freedom of movement within a whole neighbourhood. It's hard to quantify that sense of, as I referred to earlier, that village feel, where you're now part of a neighbourhood's living room. Parkettes have helped that, too, and certainly with respect to, for example, Uber Eats and the various food delivery services, they use our businesses heavily to redistribute food in the city. The bike lanes become their conduit,

without which I think the street would just be mayhem, because there's hundreds of these bikes on the street now.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have my daughter, who is in grade 7, and she now bikes to school. Part of it is on the Bloor Street bike lane. I would never, ever have her do that if she had to put her little bike and her little body in front of a car. But because there are now bike lanes, she can now bike to school on her own.

My next question is to Brian Rosborough from AMO. I noticed that the words that you used today were fairly strong from an AMO perspective: "Does anyone really believe that removing these bike lanes will solve the complex challenge of congestion in Toronto?"

I've also noticed through the recent city of Toronto report that the cost of removing bike lanes in the city of Toronto could cost upwards of \$48 million, which is an astronomical amount. My question to you is, if this government wants to address congestion, where should they direct their investment?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Congestion is a very, very complex social and economic and infrastructure problem. Investment in transit is an important way to offset congestion. Currently we have transit systems that are feeling the effects of the homelessness crisis and people opting not to use transit, opting for rideshare and carshare instead.

We've got systemic problems that need to be addressed. We've got an underinvestment in transit that is a problem. Really, I think the opportunity is for the province to sit down with municipalities to take a look together at what is a very, very complex problem, and determine together how best to address it. There are many, many factors. The answer really is through collaboration, rather than a unilateral decision to address one very small component of gridlock and transportation challenges.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Three and a half minutes left. MPP French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much for your presentations and the work that you are doing—obviously across your communities, but broadly in the province.

Mr. Burchell, thank you for your comments. "We aren't a freeway; we are a village," I think paints a nice picture there.

Mr. Butler, when you said there is an urgent need to get this right, that is what we have been hearing since this bill has been tabled.

Municipalities know how to plan, and they plan what they know, which is their communities, as we have been hearing today. Earlier today I had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Transportation why municipalities should have their decisions overruled. You could look that up, his specific answer, but it was basically that municipalities should have to prove their bike lanes work, is kind of where we landed.

Schedule 4, which is attacking and addressing bike lane challenges, doesn't include the word "safety," interestingly, so here we are.

My question is more about bike lanes not being installed so much as conduits, but as traffic-calming measures for safety. Bike lanes are sometimes installed as traffic-calming measures with the specific goal of increasing safety by reducing vehicle volumes and speeds. This piece of legislation will require cities to demonstrate that bike lanes that remove car lanes won't have an adverse impact on vehicle traffic, which is obviously contrary to any goals of safety. Can you comment on that through your different lenses? I will start with Mr. Butler.

Mr. Scott Butler: Yes. I think that it's been proven time and time again in jurisdictions across the world that when you have properly designed and properly implemented segregated cycling lanes, it's safer for everyone. It is safer for vulnerable road users, regardless of the modality they may be employing. It's also safer for drivers.

There's this reflexive argument that says Toronto is not—insert European city of choice—Copenhagen, Paris, Amsterdam. It's not nearly as compelling as you think it is as an argument, because 75 years ago—not quite, but 50 years ago; I should know, as I'm 50—Amsterdam and Copenhagen looked like Toronto. They were congested. They were auto-centric. They had leadership that recognized there was a change afoot and that if they wanted the outcomes, particularly around safety, they needed to redesign that built environment. I don't think we need to have a die-in like they had in Amsterdam in order to effect this change and to protect these assets.

At a time when congestion is the primary motivation behind this bill, just to build off what Mr. Rosborough said, the solution is actually available, but it's been outlawed in this province, and that's road pricing. If that's really what you want to do, road pricing is the only way that's been proven, independent of jurisdiction, to actually alleviate congestion. It's been done in small cities, like Valletta in Malta, and it's been done in big cities like London. It's about to go through an experiment in North America for the first time in New York City. That's how you fight congestion and that's how you generate revenue to expand transit—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, but you're out of time for this round.

MPP McMahon, you have four and a half minutes, if you want to begin.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you for coming in, taking the time, sharing your expertise and your experience. I really appreciate it. I have four and a half minutes so I'm going to do a little rapid fire, if I can, because that includes your answer.

I'm not sure if you have seen the list of the 122 ER doctors who have written in supporting bike lanes, safe cycling infrastructure, safe roads. Also, there are letters from the CEO of Mount Sinai and the CEO of SickKids from when I was a councillor and the University bike lanes were implemented, and they are supportive of those lanes going in, including the Mount Sinai CEO saying they did a survey: 63% of their staff cycle to work and 80% of the people surveyed from the hospital would like to see more protected bike lanes.

I'm just wondering your thoughts on the CEO letters from the hospitals about the University bike lanes and others, and the 122 ER doctors. We'll start with you, Brian.

Mr. Brian Burchell: Thank you, Ms. McMahon. I believe, from the perspective of the Bloor Annex BIA or any BIA, if we can't instill a sense of safety and inclusiveness within our streetscapes, then we will cease to be a welcoming place. People will stop shopping. They'll go to the Eaton Centre.

I'm sorry to keep coming back to the economic side of things, but that is really what we're elected to do as BIAs. Safety, for us, has now become an important part of our identity: inclusiveness and making it a welcoming place for all road users, including car drivers.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right.

Next, Brian.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Bicycle transportation is universally understood to be a safe, healthy, affordable, environmentally sustainable way to get around the community. They will continue to be an important aspect of urban planning in Ontario. This legislation is at odds with those values, which is why we don't support it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you believe these doctors who are writing in?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: No reason to disbelieve them.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Awesome.

And Scott?

Mr. Scott Butler: Given the fact that these are the people who actually reassemble people who have been run over by vehicles when they've been riding on the roadway, we'd probably be wise to listen to what they have to say.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good point.

What about municipal overreach? We're just going to do a rapid fire on that. We have three members from across the table who have been former councillors, mayors and were the leaders in their municipalities. Now, I'm wondering how they would feel about government coming in and meddling in their affairs.

Brian: Municipal overreach in 30 seconds.

Mr. Brian Burchell: We studied the question of whether or not to make the bike lanes permanent on Bloor. We spent \$100,000. We consumed ourselves with the question. It's important to be data driven, and I don't believe the province has any facts to support the legislation. I just can't believe you can govern at that level so locally. It's interference.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Municipalities are the most accountable and transparent order of government in the country. They're very capable of making decisions within their jurisdiction.

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Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Scott?

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

Mr. Scott Butler: It's a dynamic they've been living with since 1867.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. So I guess we can trust municipalities to do the right thing for their communities and for their residents.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We will now move to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Grewal, please.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to all three of our presenters for taking time and coming out today and representing the communities you represent. We value the views and feedback you give us here at the committee.

I'd like to start by reframing this argument that the government is just coming after bike users and we're going to be—you know, "We don't support bike users." I don't believe that to be the case.

My dad used to take me biking every Sunday. We used to go around the entire neighbourhood. We grew up in Etobicoke. After that, we would go see some local shops and then come back home by the afternoon and continue on with our day. So biking was a central part of my childhood and I grew up going to school using my bike sometimes, as well. And I see that across a lot of our members on the government side as well. We're not here to fight against bike users or tell them that they're not welcome in the province of Ontario. They're very much welcome in the province of Ontario and we do support them.

But the conversation we're having here today around bike lanes—and a lot of what is in the bill, before I jump into the bike lane portion as well with questions, is really taking a look at how can things be more effective for both modes of transportation. When we take a look at bicycles being used on Bloor, on University, on Yonge, those bike lanes—like the minister said in his conversation this morning—can be relocated to different side streets which have less traffic volumes.

That's the conversation we're really having today: basically removing them from one section but adding them into another section, where they're able to have their own space, for sure, but then have their own—I would say it would be safer for somebody who is riding a bicycle to be riding on a street with less traffic versus a street with more traffic, when we take a look at how clogged these major arteries are for commuting into Toronto or leaving Toronto.

Every member that doesn't represent, I would say, Toronto, experiences that, whether they go towards the DVP, whether they go towards the Gardiner, and they do their daily commute back and forth. So that's what the conversation is that I see around—the government is coming up with creative solutions to ensure that drivers have their own space and we're able to move drivers and we're able to move cars across the road, and at the same time, provide bicycle users a safe space as well.

This bill is packed with a lot of things. We're talking a lot about the bicycle portion of it because, obviously, I do recognize that it's a very hot topic compared to everything else. But this bill is also working on building more highways in the province of Ontario. When we take a look at the Bradford Bypass, we take a look at Highway 413,

we also take a look at the fees for drivers' licences and other things that have remained frozen, that are not going up—that we're continuing to save drivers money, we're continuing to put money back into the pockets of the people of Ontario. That's a lot of the great work that we're doing here in the bill.

I'm going to start with the bike lane questions, then move a little bit towards the highway infrastructure that we're building here in Ontario and some of the transit work that we're doing as well.

My first question would be to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Again, we meet with you on a regular basis, when it comes to AMO. We always have a great time. We love our city partners and mayoral partners, and we rely on them for support back and forth. But when it comes to this issue, are you for or against moving bike lanes from major traffic arteries to smaller side streets?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: We're opposed to the province intervening in municipal planning around the appropriate location for bike lanes.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: But would you have an opinion on that particular statement, of moving those particular bike lanes from a major street to a side street?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: If it was a good idea, the municipalities would surely do it without provincial intervention. Really, our point is that communities are well positioned to make these decisions effectively. If there is transportation science related to the relocation of bike lanes, that's something municipalities, I'm sure, would take into consideration.

Our concern is about the province substituting its authority for municipal authority, because we don't have a lot of examples where that has been successful.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: So I would just like to interject there for a second. When we take a look at the province's responsibility and we take a look at the minister's responsibility, I feel like his responsibility really takes a look at ensuring the smooth flow of all traffic, whether it be transit, whether it be bicycle, whether it be vehicle, throughout the province of Ontario, whether it's northern Ontario, whether we're talking about downtown Toronto.

If the government of Ontario, the Premier that represents the entire province, takes a look at it and sees a better way to connect Ontarians throughout the province and sees this from a larger lens of not just looking down at a couple of wards, which these changes are being implemented in, but looking at it in a provincial perspective where hundreds of thousands of cars are moving through these arteries—I just want to understand why municipalities are not open to having a conversation of relocating these bike lanes into a different aspect of the city, while maintaining the connectivity that they have.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: What we're absolutely open to is a conversation with the province about how best to actually address congestion and gridlock, recognizing that it has a negative impact on our economy—local economies and the provincial economy—but that means sitting down together as two orders of government and taking a

look at the very, very complex factors that affect gridlock and construction.

We've got lanes closed everywhere. We've got Uber drivers and people having deliveries constantly. We've got car accidents. We've got very important road safety responsibilities—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: All the things that come with a hustling, bustling city and a big economy like ours.

But I do appreciate your comments there on working together, because this is an issue we should all be working together on, the municipalities and the province, to ensure that we create a system where making sure that the flow of traffic is moving at a decent speed and we're not costing the economy millions and millions of dollars and we're ensuring that the bike users also have their own space to ensure that they're able to commute, whether they're doing their day-to-day activities or going to work.

We want to see everybody be able to thrive in Ontario, especially during the three months of great weather that we have. I mean, that's the best time of the year to be using your bicycle and be out and about, and at the end of the day, it gives a good sense of joy to those people as well, so I feel like we can continue to work together.

But currently, where we're moving these bike lanes off of Bloor, Yonge and University, we see that it's going to create a lot of traffic alleviation as well—

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: But my last commentary is for the Good Roads association here, and I wanted to ask you about Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass and those infrastructure investments. The 413 is going to have a rapid bus lane on it, as well, to ensure that we're investing in transit while building a highway. What are your opinions on those particular investments that the government is doing?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): In 40 seconds.

Mr. Scott Butler: Our exclusive focus is on local transportation, so assets owned by the municipalities in Ontario as well as First Nations. We haven't had an opinion.

I would respectfully suggest that if anyone is under the illusion that building highways is going to solve congestion, they will be disappointed in the near future.

Interruption.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You're not allowed to clap. No noise from the audience.

Interruption.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Well, but then you put me in an awkward position, so don't do that. Thank you.

MPP French, please, for the next round of questions.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I had asked a question about the importance of traffic calming and safety and you're welcome to answer that, but really, having listened to the government lecture—or the government's comments, I am dying to know if any of you are aware of where the secondary streets that are going to become new cycling arteries or whatnot are and, if they exist, why they aren't being used.

Further to that, by shutting down bike lanes on major arteries, is that going to ensure that cyclists and bike lane users no longer travel on those arteries? Back to a safety question, I suppose, for all three of you. I'm going to borrow a tactic from my colleague MPP McMahon here: Quick and dirty, let's go.

Mr. Brian Burchell: I think it's naive to think that a backstreet bike lane is going to be suddenly followed by cyclists. I think they will continue to bike on Bloor like they did before; the government can't command that they go on different streets, less direct routes to their destinations.

Further, in the Annex for example, the most natural east-west route is a street called Barton and it's full of parked cars with little stickers that people get from the city; the city oversells that by about 110%, like an airline would. There aren't enough spaces for car parking, so I would invite the government to tell those residents that those permits will be removed. The government may as well extend itself into permit parking as well to create the bike lane on a side street—which the bikes won't use, because they'll still be on Bloor; it's just a less safe place.

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Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Cyclists will take the route that suits them best. They always have; they'll continue to do so. With bike lanes, they'll do it more safely than in streets without bike lanes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Butler: Those who don't feel safe may be more inclined to drive, which is counter to the congestion argument.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Further to that, that's something that my colleague and I had heard from bike lane users at a town hall that we hosted on Zoom. We did hear that as people no longer feel safe and are not protected on our roadways, they may be forced to buy a car that they otherwise wouldn't have, adding further to the vehicle traffic congestion, to that point.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you very much to all the presenters this afternoon. It's nice to see the room full.

I'm going to read out a quotation, gentlemen. I'm wondering if he could help me understand, or just take a guess as to who it's attributed to: "You're nervous when there's no bike lanes. At least I was. We have to do everything we can to make sure there's never a death in the city. One death is ... too many when it comes to bicycle riders." I'm wondering who in the province of Ontario do you think said that?

Mr. Scott Butler: Premier Ford?

Mr. Joel Harden: That would be correct. That was correct. It was Premier Ford who mentioned that in 2017, when he took a bike ride right outside of this building. I'm very happy to say on Wellesley, there is protected bike infrastructure for cyclists, scooters, wheelchair users and active transportation advocates.

So I'm wondering if you could help me understand how that guy had that opinion in 2017, and in 2024 he seems to

be born again in taking choice away from transit commuters in every community in this province. Maybe, Mr. Burchell, if you want to talk about the impact on business—what's changed with this guy?

Mr. Brian Burchell: I think you'd have to ask the Premier.

Mr. Joel Harden: Interesting.

Anybody else want to take a stab?

Mr. Scott Butler: I'll take a stab, but not speculating on the Premier's motivations or change in thinking. I used to live in Bloor West Village. I've seen how the traffic patterns have changed. There are more people using the same amount of road space. The decision by the city of Toronto—and I think it was the correct decision—to implement those cycling facilities does make it frustrating. Now, when I drive along Bloor—I no longer live in the city, but if I do find myself driving along there—maybe "frustration" is the wrong word, but it is envious watching somebody on a bike whip pass me through stoplight after stoplight after stoplight, and eventually envy gives way to frustration, I think.

I don't think that's anything that's unique to the Premier. I think a lot of people experience that. But as tempting as it is to think that way, it overlooks the fact that we simply have too many people using too little space.

Mr. Joel Harden: Good point, Mr. Butler. I take your point.

I'm wondering the extent to which, as MPP McMahon was saying this morning, the lack of funding for operational transit and the unbelievable delay in major transit projects has to do with the gridlock we're facing in our city, which seems to be blamed on bicyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users. I'm thinking about the Eglinton Cross-town LRT that's four years late and over \$1 billion over budget; the Ontario Line, some parts of which are costing up to \$1 billion per kilometre; the Finch line, which has had major infrastructure problems. Metrolinx, we heard this morning, is almost single-handedly responsible for some of the major snarls all over the city, and yet this government won't even allow Mr. Verster, who leads Metrolinx, to be called to any committee of this House, particularly public accounts.

So I'm wondering: From your perspective, working for businesses, working with municipalities and working for vulnerable road users, Mr. Butler, would you like this government to put more operational funds into transit and places beyond Toronto? Certainly my city of Ottawa is crying out for such help. Or I don't know if AMO would like to take a stab at that.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Yes, absolutely. There's a huge return on investment to the province for investment in public transit. When people have good public transit options, they will avail themselves of them. So, the more investment in transit, the better. Give people real, safe, healthy, affordable options to get around in well-planned communities and they will use them—absolutely we support that.

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

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Okay. I'll be very quick.

Reaction from any of the three of you: We've recently had a decision in my city of Ottawa to increase the cost of the seniors' bus pass by 120%, from \$49 a month to almost \$118 a month. That is because of cuts from the province. We have a \$120-million shortfall for transit in the city of Ottawa and we are asking seniors, days after Remembrance Day—I'm thinking about that generation that built our communities—to pay twice the amount or more for their bus pass. Do you think that's fair? Will that help congestion?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: It's a complex situation. We're optimistic that the province will agree to sit down with AMO and the city of Toronto and have that conversation.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. MPP McMahon, you're on: four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I need to take a few seconds to address my colleague across the floor for his comments. With all due respect, I'm sure you cycled on Sundays with your family. I would encourage you to try cycling to work, because as a person who cycles—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Point of order.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: —I have the right to use the most convenient and direct route to get to where I want to go—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McMahon, we have a point of order from MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I feel like that's an invalid point of order. It doesn't reflect anything that we're talking about here.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I think that the indication was to speak more towards the bill, please, MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: As a person who cycles, I have the right to take the most convenient and direct route to and from where I'm going and to arrive there and get home safely, like everyone else—like people who drive, people who walk, people who take transit. I shouldn't have to be rerouted out to Kalamazoo and all over hell's half acre to get there. I have as much right to the main streets. I want to be on the main streets. I want to shop. I want to enjoy our neighbourhoods.

We're just going to leave it at that. I would just challenge the members to get on bikes and try it out and see how much safer they feel in a bike lane.

Now we'll go over to our members who are presenting here, and we're going to do rapid fire again. Do you feel it is a good use of taxpayers' dollars—especially for somebody living in Tweed, in Brampton, in Burlington, outside of the city—to rip out safe cycling infrastructure in downtown Toronto? Is that how you want your taxpayer dollars spent, Brian, Brian and Scott?

Mr. Brian Burchell: No. I think it's wasteful, I think it's dangerous and I think it's reckless.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: We would like to have a broader conversation with the province about the respective use of property tax dollars and income tax dollars so

we can create a truly sustainable, prosperous province together.

Mr. Scott Butler: I'd welcome the opportunity to look more broadly across the province and to places where we may not think of the need for cycling infrastructure—places like Niagara, places like Leamington, where there are a lot of temporary foreign workers who are using bikes to get around on provincial highways. Frankly, it's really, really dangerous and unnecessary.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Have you heard much about this Transportation Tomorrow Survey, and would you like to see it released to the public?

Mr. Brian Burchell: Absolutely. I think facts that are newer than 2011, which the government seems fond of quoting, would be welcome for all of us.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Evidence is the key to good public policy, along with consultation with real experts. So if there's information available, I'm happy to look at it.

Mr. Scott Butler: Same.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Ditto.

Lastly, what do you feel is the main cause of congestion on our roads?

Mr. Brian Burchell: Too many cars. And I believe that the congestion points, according to CAA, are not on Bloor Street bike lanes; they're on Highway 401, the DVP and the 404, the Gardiner Expressway, Highway 401 between Bayview and Don Mills, and Highway 409 between 401 and Kipling Avenue. Those are the critical congestion points—worst in the country, according to the CAA.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: It's a remarkably complex problem: road construction, residential construction in cities like Toronto, changing motorist habits, lack of investment in transit. It's a very, very long, long list.

Mr. Scott Butler: Yes, it's exactly what we've said. It's a combination of those. I think there are more granular concerns that contribute to really focused sections of congestion, but more broadly speaking, it's too many cars fighting for too little space.

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Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

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

We'll move over to the government side. MPP Sandhu, please begin.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to all the members for your presentation. I will direct my question to Good Roads. Scott, good to see you. I've had the opportunity to meet you several times and I always appreciate the ideas you guys bring to the table and your dedication towards improving municipal roads and infrastructure in general.

MPP Grewal also asked you a question regarding Highway 413. One of the important pieces of this legislation is that this will allow for expedited construction timelines for priority highway projects like Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. Even though you have already shared your opinion on highways, I would like to bring your attention—you know we have seen significant population growth in the GTA in the last decade. If we talk about Brampton, the census report on population showed

that almost 40 people choose to move to Brampton every day.

We need Highway 413 desperately because every day I get calls from my constituents asking about the status of Highway 413 and when we're going to start construction. Brampton's growth rate is double that of the region of Peel. I firmly believe, and the people of Brampton firmly believe, that this highway will not only reduce traffic congestion, it will significantly contribute to the provincial GDP, create thousands of new jobs and also attract new businesses in the region.

I just want to know your opinion. Even though we agree that we need to invest in transit as well—and the government is making unprecedented investments in transit: Hurontario LRT; two-way, all-day GO; Brampton Transit—but we also believe that this is a critical piece of infrastructure that people of the GTA desperately need. I just want to know your opinion: Do you think that Highway 413 will reduce traffic congestion, and what are your thoughts on this?

Mr. Scott Butler: Let me unpack that as you presented it. I think in terms of the population growth, what you're seeing in Brampton is being replicated in every corner of the province: It's in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Ottawa, Kingston, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Windsor. We see small cities becoming regional economic centres.

In terms of the socio-economic impact that you're talking about of the construction of Highway 413, I agree: It's going to create jobs. It's going to provide connection between, I believe, the 400 and the 401, around that northwest quadrant of the city or the GTA more broadly. It isn't going to solve congestion though. I can't overstate that enough. It will provide marginal gains, but those marginal gains will be lost very quickly. We have seen this with highway expansion in every single jurisdiction in the world, in the industrialized world. It's a law.

So yes, while it provides that connectivity, I think the idea that somehow it will abate congestion—it may do that initially, but I assure you, in a very short period of time, those gains will be lost.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you. I will pivot to bike lanes now.

As MPP Grewal shared his story about how he used to bike with his dad, I would like to share a quote from a local councillor in Brampton, the councillor from ward 7 and 8. He has openly supported the removal of bike lanes from busy streets. As MPP Grewal and Minister Sarkaria mentioned in comments this morning, we are not opposed to bike lanes, we are just opposed to having bike lanes on busy streets.

He has shared concerns that putting bike lanes on busy streets will lead to traffic congestion, parking challenges, cost and limited use. Do you think that when people are stuck in gridlock—do you think the bike lanes should be on the busiest roads?

Mr. Scott Butler: I think municipalities are best positioned to make the determination about where those cyc-

ling facilities should go, simply by nature of being so close to the constituents they serve.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to all of this afternoon's presenters. I appreciate everyone taking time out of their busy day to come and share your opinions and your perspectives with the committee.

My question is for Brian from AMO. I represent the riding of Burlington, Ontario, and probably eight years ago, we had a pilot project in Burlington where we had a major arterial road that we reduced from four lanes of traffic down to two lanes, with a left-hand turn lane running through the middle, and then installed cycle lanes. After a year, the city changed course and moved the road back to four lanes, reversing what was called, in our community, a "road diet."

There have been recommendations. I'm understanding my community, a suburban community, is different than an urban community, but that road diet fostered conversations about the installation of off-road cycling roads, paved cycling tracks, where, in Burlington, what we're looking at doing is removing the boulevards between the sidewalks and then paving the boulevards, removing the grass and using those as a place for cyclists. It preserves the roads for traffic, it preserves the sidewalks for pedestrian traffic, and then we are getting rid of the boulevards, taking the grass, paving them over and using those for cyclists. So it adds a little bit of additional protection, from my perspective, more than the white line on the road or the painted picture of the bicycle.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: There was an incident in my family where my daughter was actually riding her bike in one of those lanes and was hit by a car, so I understand the concerns about trying to keep cyclists safe.

I just wondered, in the little bit of time that we have left, if you could share your thoughts about maybe some alternatives and what you think about paving these boulevards. The other thing we've done in my community is we've looked at hydro corridors, and we've installed bike paths there. Any ideas or suggestions on may be some other alternatives that we could be exploring?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: I don't have any suggestions, but I think what you're describing is a community taking a look at its needs in a very thoughtful way and determining how best to plan transportation and active transportation in the community and making changes that are needed—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, but that's the time allotted for this round of questioning.

We will now thank the presenters here. You can move back from the table.

CITY OF TORONTO

DAVID SUZUKI FOUNDATION

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We will ask the next group to prepare to come up: That is the city of Toronto,

the David Suzuki Foundation. The second person is virtual.

If the city of Toronto wants to begin, that would be great. We'll turn on the microphone from here, so please go ahead.

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Good afternoon. My name is Jacquelyn Hayward, and I am the director of planning, design and management in transportation services at the city of Toronto.

I have been requested by Toronto city council to appear at this committee to comment on Bill 212 regarding the proposed bike lane framework and amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. Further detail is provided in our written submission, which has been distributed to you.

On behalf of the city of Toronto, I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to speak about one of the most pressing challenges we face in our rapidly growing city: managing traffic congestion.

Through Bill 212, the province seeks to fight gridlock and get drivers where they need to go faster. While expanding highways and building new infrastructure are key provincial priorities, experience here and in other cities has shown that a connected, safe cycling network isn't just a nice-to-have, it's an essential part of managing traffic congestion, improving safety and supporting a more sustainable future.

Toronto is a city in transformation. Our population grew by over 125,000 people last year, and with this scale of investment and growth comes challenges, particularly in terms of traffic. Construction-related road closures are a primary factor contributing to congestion across the city of Toronto today, not bike lanes.

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We continue to be the number one busiest city in North America for construction. Toronto currently has almost four and a half times more cranes active on construction sites than the next highest city. Provincial projects like the Eglinton Crosstown and Ontario Line are reshaping our city with much-needed investment in transit, and while these projects will bring long-term benefits, the lane closures required to construct them have been disruptive, contributing to congestion as well.

Based on the latest transportation mode share data, it is clear that the way people travel in Toronto is evolving. Along key corridors in this city, in response to provincial policy, multi-unit housing developers are currently building more bike parking than car parking, reflecting a growing demand for active transportation.

This is where bike lines play a key role. Dedicated lanes are needed to support transportation choices that improve traffic flow. The benefits go beyond convenience. Cycling infrastructure is essential to improve road safety and boosts public health by encouraging physical activity, which reduces health care costs.

Bike lanes help the economy. As Brian from the BIA stated, studies in Toronto have shown that bike lanes can increase retail activity and bring more customers to local businesses. As we continue to grow, we must continue to invest in cycling infrastructure, alongside transit invest-

ment and other congestion management approaches, to make Toronto a better place to live.

Toronto city council has requested that the province work collaboratively with cities to address traffic congestion and road safety, and withdraw the proposed amendments to the HTA and the bike lane framework contained in Bill 212. The proposed bike lane framework would undermine local decision-making authority about the design and operation of city streets.

Last week, Toronto city council voted to express formal opposition to the province's proposal to remove the existing bike lanes on Bloor Street, University Avenue and Yonge Street, and for the city's legal team to further review our options. More than 20 kilometres of existing cycling infrastructure on these streets has been built following multiple years of evidence-based planning, detailed traffic analysis and public consultation, as well as data collection to determine effectiveness.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, I am here on behalf of the city of Toronto to say that these bike lanes matter. The proposed removal of bike lanes on Bloor, Yonge and University would have wide-reaching negative effects on Toronto's transportation system. The bike lanes on Bloor, Yonge and University play an essential role in safe mobility for all. In fact, the bike lanes on these streets provide access to 300,000 people and jobs, several hospitals, as well as 36 schools within 250 metres. As was noted, the CEOs of both Mount Sinai Hospital and SickKids hospital have written to the city in support of these bike lanes.

Usage has increased. This year, there has already been over 750,000 rides on Bike Share Toronto that started or ended on these corridors. Removing these bike lanes would reduce mobility for thousands of residents who rely on these routes every day.

The evidence is clear that bike lanes improve safety. Eight years after the installation of bike lanes on Bloor Street, despite a 40% to 90% increase in cycling volume, the number of injuries involving people cycling dropped by 56%. Injuries to pedestrians and people driving decreased as well. Removing these lanes would reverse the safety gains we've worked so hard to achieve.

Removing these bike lanes would come at a significant financial cost. The city of Toronto has invested over \$27 million in delivering the bike lanes on Bloor, Yonge and University, and the proposed removals would require extensive road work, with preliminary estimates putting the cost at over \$48 million.

While the intent of removing bike lanes may be to improve traffic flow, the construction process to dismantle these lanes would cause considerable delays and disruption for drivers. For example, removing the recently improved bike lanes on Bloor between Spadina and Avenue Road would require a complete road reconstruction with multiple phases of intersection and lane closures.

Removing the bike lanes on Bloor, Yonge and University would not be a short-term inconvenience. We'd likely be facing multiple years of successive construction projects that would disrupt daily commutes, harm businesses

and incur costs for years to come. Removing the bike lanes would leave many people at risk.

While providing alternative routes on secondary streets may sound like a solution, local streets are often discontinuous and cannot often effectively connect people to key destinations. The reality is that decent alternatives would likely remove lanes of traffic on other streets instead. Before the bike lanes were installed on Yonge Street, alternative routes on Mount Pleasant Road and Avenue Road were examined. The evaluation found that Yonge Street presented the best opportunity to improve road safety outcomes, and the least impact to motor vehicle traffic flow with those three corridors. Our streets are not just for cars. They are shared spaces that must accommodate everyone. Removing bike lanes would send us in the wrong direction, undoing years of progress, denying everyone who uses Toronto's roads the safer, more efficient transportation options that they deserve.

The city is committed to continuing to work with the province to better manage traffic congestion, preparing to open our new transit lines with you, improving existing transit and providing options for the millions of people who live, work and travel through this vibrant city.

Finally, Toronto city council requests that the Ministry of Transportation publish the results of the Transportation Tomorrow Survey 2022 as soon as possible in order to best inform work to address congestion and road safety.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, I didn't give you warning, but your time is up. But there will be Q&As and you might be able to finish.

To the representative from the David Suzuki Foundation, just state your name before you begin.

Mr. Gideon Forman: My name is Gideon Forman and I am with the David Suzuki Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm here to talk briefly about the deep flaws in Bill 212 with respect to bike lanes and Highway 413.

The measures proposed in this bill, Madam Chair, will make gridlock worse, undermine the business community and, frankly, make Ontario something of a laughingstock, because I cannot think of another jurisdiction, anywhere, that is busting congestion by building more highways and discouraging the use of bicycles.

Abundant evidence shows that new highways incentivize greater automobile use, and shortly after they're built, they are as clogged as ever with cars and trucks. We tackle congestion not by building new highways, but by offering drivers fast and convenient alternatives to the automobile, including top-notch public transit and protected bike lanes, so they can leave the car at home or not need one in the first place.

We bust congestion by making better use of the highways we already have—Highway 407, for example, which everyone knows is underutilized. Instead of wasting untold billions on a new expressway that will destroy agricultural land and put our farmers out of work, why not lower tolls on Highway 407? This common-sense approach would take as many as 21,000 trucks a day off the 401 and improve safety and travel times for 401 car drivers.

As well, lowering tolls on the 407 could be undertaken very quickly, unlike building a new expressway, which will take years, if not a decade. And I will mention, with all due respect, that Ontario's track record when it comes to building infrastructure projects on time, is not encouraging. One thinks of the Eglinton Crosstown, the Finch West LRT, the Hazel McCallion Line—I could go on—all of which are behind schedule. If the goal is providing fast congestion relief, we should make better use of our current highways.

We're also very concerned about Highway 413's cost. Media reports have put it at \$10 billion or more, but the fact is, Ontarians really don't know how much we'll be spending on the 413. This, for one simple reason: the Ontario government won't tell us. The government won't tell us what it will cost to build the highway and, equally troubling, Madam Chair, it won't tell us what it will cost to expropriate the land that the highway will require.

This is an important question, and I think taxpayers deserve some answers. Why won't the Ontario government just come clean and tell us what the 413 will cost? Are they hiding something? The government says the province is open for business. Fair enough. So why won't it present the business case for the 413, including how much we'll have to pay for it?

We know the dollars will be large because it's a long highway—over 50 kilometres, as you know. Farmers have told me that some of the greenbelt land that will be paved for the highway is, in their words, “among the best-quality farmland in the world.” So it won't come cheap when Ontario goes to buy it. As I've said, we still don't know what the total bill will be, and that's disturbing because as taxpayers, you and I will be paying for it, likely for many years to come.

The 413 also brings massive opportunity costs. Those billions that will be wasted on an unnecessary greenbelt highway could fund so many other things that Ontarians need.

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We crunched some numbers based on the very conservative estimate that the 413 would cost \$8 billion. What did we find? Well, with that money, we could hire 20,000 nurses—yes, 20,000—and keep them working for more than four years throughout the province.

Or consider housing in Ontario: In 2021, the Financial Accountability Office estimated that more than 16,000 Ontarians were homeless in the province on a given night. Even if that number is now 20,000—it's a few years later—we could build affordable housing for all of these folks for about \$4 billion, or half the estimated cost of the 413. Imagine that, Madam Chair: For a fraction of what Queen's Park will spend on an unnecessary highway, we can take real strides toward eradicating homelessness province-wide.

Alternatively, we could redirect this money to hospitals. The province is now constructing one in Brampton, as you know, at a cost of about \$700 million. For the cash it's wasting on the 413, we could build 11 hospitals—

that's 11 hospitals—across Ontario comparable to the new Peel Memorial.

Of course, if we cancel the 413, we need another way to move the region's residents, and that other way, of course, is public transit. A report by Environmental Defence and its partners suggests the province could expand current GO service, build a new GO train to Bolton and provide bus rapid transit and light rail for just \$6.9 billion. But here's the kicker: Transit would move about three times as many commuters as the highway would—about 22,000 people an hour versus just 7,000 on the 413.

Finally—and I'm just about done—I want to mention that public opposition to the highway is vast and growing. An anti-413 petition circulated by my organization, the Suzuki foundation, now has more than 90,000 signatures, making it one of the foundation's most popular online actions. The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario has come out against the highway; they represent more than 51,000 nurses and nursing students. The Ontario branch of the National Farmers Union, which represents thousands of our province's farmers, is running a petition under the banner “Farmers Say Yes to Greenbelt, No to Hwy 413.” And finally, an EKOS poll fielded in late 2023 found that 74%—that's almost three in four Ontarians—agree the greenbelt is no place for new highways. And 81%—that's eight in 10—agree with farmers' opposition to the highway.

In sum, people from many walks of life, including our nurses, our farmers, scientists, high-profile citizens oppose a highway that will pave thousands of acres of foodland and destroy hundreds of acres of greenbelt. So we ask you to put the brakes on the 413.

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

Mr. Gideon Forman: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Instead of building an expressway that will incentivize greater car use, let's invest in solutions that really will solve gridlock: Reduce tolls on the 407, ensure that our neighbourhoods are walkable and safe for people on bicycles so they don't need to drive and invest in more bus rapid transit and GO services so it's easy and convenient to leave the car at home. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for your presentations.

Now we will move to the official opposition. MPP Bell, please, for your round.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My questions will first focus on Jacquelyn Hayward from the city of Toronto. Thank you so much for coming in. Toronto is ranked as the worst city in North America for traffic, with horrendously long commute times. I honestly find it very hard to believe that three bike lanes in downtown Toronto are the reason why the region has terrible congestion issues.

I want to talk about the city of Toronto's position—I know the city of Toronto has a very evidence-based focused department of transportation services. In the city of Toronto's position, how can our region best relieve congestion to help people quickly get from A to B?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Working together with the province is a key part of that. Although we oppose—and I

have council behind me to say we oppose—the bike lane framework that’s in Bill 212, there is a willingness to sit down and work through what those opportunities are, one of which was reducing the length of time of construction of the Gardiner Expressway, so we thank the government for the partnership there.

But continuing to look at more creative solutions such as the use of traffic agents at intersections when there’s particularly congested spaces during construction, accelerating construction—investment in smart signals is another key thing, but the notable investment in transit in Ontario and particularly in Toronto will make a difference to congestion. We just need to have a little bit more patience, because we’re going to soon have the Eglinton Crosstown open there. In the meantime, let’s continue to work together on real solutions that provide mobility options.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The Minister of Transportation mentioned in his press conferences that approximately 1.2% of people bike, and that was based on a 2011 study. Has the city of Toronto conducted any surveys or collected any evidence to indicate how many people regularly bike in Toronto? Is it 1.2%?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: That’s very old data, and I believe that may be a reference to province-wide data. The Ministry of Transportation has the data in front of them. The Transportation Tomorrow Survey 2022 is available, and it demonstrates numbers that are much different from that. When we look at work-based trips city-wide, we’re looking at numbers that are closer to 6%. And when we’re looking at trips that are dedicated directly going into the downtown core in the city of Toronto, that’s closer to 10%. In wards that are served by the bike lanes in question, the numbers are staggeringly higher. That’s data the ministry has itself.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to talk a little bit about safety. Do you have any evidence that you would like to share that the city of Toronto has collected about the impact of bike lanes on safety?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Absolutely. Every time we do a bike lane project, there is the before data, where we look at the types of collisions that have taken place. It does take time to be able to see collision trends play out in real life. The data that I spoke to in my remarks was about Bloor Street, where we had eight years of data, and we can see that 56% of collisions involving people cycling resulting in injury have been reduced. Those are trends that are very consistent with what other cities across the world and North America have seen.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for your answers.

My next question is to Gideon Forman. Thank you so much for coming in online today. I was taking careful notes when you talked about the impact of highways on congestion. I just want to summarize. Essentially, highways don’t solve congestion. When new highways are built and opened, more people drive and, essentially, congestion remains. Can you elaborate on this argument?

Mr. Gideon Forman: Sure, thank you, MPP Bell. Yes, it’s essentially the simple principle of induced demand.

You build a spanking new highway, it seems like it’s going to be fast, it’s open, initially, and so it incentivizes more car use. And not surprisingly, you find people taking more trips, using the highway more frequently, going on longer trips. This is something that’s well documented in jurisdictions around the world. It’s not surprising. What happens in short order is it gets filled and you’re right back where you were before.

So what we’re saying at the David Suzuki Foundation is we need to get at the root of the problem, which is that we have not given people enough alternatives so they don’t need to drive. If we did that along the lines we’ve suggested, with public transit and walkable and cyclable communities, we would not have as many cars on the road and, therefore, those who absolutely had to drive would have a much more comfortable commute because lots of people would be taking other means of transportation.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My second question to you is about planning. We are hearing a lot of talk about spending billions of dollars, quite frankly, in building new highways, but what we don’t hear a lot of conversation about is how we plan in our city, in our region and in our province. I have been very concerned that the Conservatives have eased density requirements in towns and cities. They have made it much easier to build very expensive, low-density sprawl on farmland and immediately abutting municipalities.

When we’re talking about the government’s approach to planning, what kind of impact does that have on congestion?

Mr. Gideon Forman: Yes, low-density sprawl is a recipe for congestion. You get people far from cities, so they’re forced to drive. It’s irrational from just so many different points of view to put money into low-density sprawl.

First of all, the costs are enormous. Municipalities have to service all of that low-density sprawl with infrastructure, electricity, sewage, water, so it’s an enormous cost. People are highly dependent on the car.

It makes much more sense from so many points of view, not least economic, to have people in what they call “gentle densification” within the current footprint of cities. Put people on transit lines, bus lines, subway lines, bike lanes. This is good for the environment, but it’s just rational in terms of public planning. And if you look, MPP Bell, at leading cities around the world, this is what they’re doing. They’re making better use of the space they already have.

This is a theme I don’t understand with this government. They seem to want to keep putting money into new things. What we’re saying is, if you’re fiscally prudent, you make better use of what you already have. You make better use of the current urban footprint to put people in communities where you already have—

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

Mr. Gideon Forman: —and you don’t build new highways; you make better use of the highways you already have, thank you.

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Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. I'm done.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Do you want to ask a question?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, I'll—

Mr. Joel Harden: Make a statement?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Make a statement? No, I'm going to ask a quick question.

City of Toronto: We've heard government members here today say if there is a better way of doing this, that municipalities should follow that. In your opinion, is the provincial government in a better position to make decisions for your municipality than a municipality is?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: No. City council has been clear in making that position—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We're out of time.

This round, for the official opposition: MPP McMahon, you can start.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much.

It's nice to see you again, Jacquelyn. First of all, thank you for all the great work you do to keep everyone safe on the road. We worked on many projects, including the Woodbine bike lanes, which I'm very proud of, and including the former mayor, Rob Ford, smiling in his picture cutting the ribbon at Sherbourne, opening the Sherbourne bike lanes back in the day in 2013—so a long history of keeping people safe.

But you hear this rhetoric, right? "I never see anyone in the bike lanes. No one's biking in the winter. They're clogging up streets and causing congestions. Small businesses suffer. They're holding up emergency vehicles." All of that has been proven over and over again—and you would have more facts than I would on that—to be fiction.

We know with any type of change anywhere in any aspect of our life, there are growing pains, and I think we've found that with most of the new cycling infrastructure you've put in, the growing pains, and then maybe you tweak the lights and things like that—but can you talk about that kind of rhetoric and what the facts are on that?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Sure. Thank you for the question. It starts with evidence-based planning, so when we're doing analysis on the network level, we look at where the existing demand is and where anticipated demand is because of growth pressures that are coming, as well as looking at collision trends and where we can make the most difference in improving road safety. But once a project is designed, we also have deep consultation with communities that takes place at a local level, meeting directly with business improvement areas and residents' associations to get feedback, to make sure that the projects that are being planned are meeting residents needs and that we're aware of their concerns before they're installed.

We don't get everything right, so as you said, when it is installed, there's a significant amount of data collection that takes place in order to understand effectiveness as well as a feedback period in which we can take feedback and make adjustments—additional accessible loading spaces; more signal timing for green through-movements

instead of left at a particular location—because while we can do a lot of forecasting, we can't predict the future perfectly, so we make those adjustments on the fly after a project is installed. That's why local government is really important to be able to be involved in making the decisions on projects like this because it's very close to the residents and communities that the project serves.

The point that you made around emergency services: We work very closely with our emergency services partners to monitor. We know that the impact on emergency services is not a negative one; they've spoken to that with their own data.

And we track things like number of people who bike in winter. We know that yes, of course, less people bike in winter, but it's about a quarter to a third of people biking in the summer months who continue to bike all-year round. So we're trying to serve everyone in a safe way.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Would it be helpful if the government released the Transportation Tomorrow Survey?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Yes. We have access to it as a partner in it, and we believe it should be available for public consumption and planning.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Because they're using outdated stats? This 1.2% statistic just keeps getting thrown out.

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: That's not a current stat for the city of Toronto or the province of Ontario.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Gideon, over to you. No one's really spoken about the affordability angle of cycling. Do you want to comment on that?

Mr. Gideon Forman: Absolutely. I mean, there's no question that it's expensive to operate—there's no question. I mean, I have seen different data that, depending on what city you live in, the cost can be as much as \$10,000 a year to operate a car between your insurance and fuel—

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

Mr. Gideon Forman: So the cost is enormous, and for lower-income folks—folks who are challenged financially now—there's no question that bicycles and safe cycling infrastructure are a godsend to make life more affordable for them.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you think it would be important for the government to release the Transportation Tomorrow Survey, for everyone to have the facts?

Mr. Gideon Forman: Absolutely. Why would they hide something from the public?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Over to the government side: MPP Bresee.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to both presenters this afternoon for your content.

I'll begin with Ms. Hayward from the city of Toronto. I have a couple of questions, for my information and clarity, to start with.

You did mention a growth rate of about 120,000 people last year. You talked about the cranes and the construction

that's going on. Are these deemed to be beneficial to the city of Toronto?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Absolutely. The investment and growth in our city is more so than other places, and it means a more prosperous city for everyone.

Mr. Ric Bresee: With that, there's obviously an increase in tax revenue and property tax revenue that can be used towards a wide variety of projects. Correct?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Sure.

Mr. Ric Bresee: As MPP McMahon mentioned earlier, I am one of the members here who is a former municipal leader. I was the mayor in a small community. It's nothing anywhere near the size of Toronto, certainly, but I know that in the processes that municipalities work through when they're developing any kind of road infrastructure, they use the traffic manual, as it's referred to. There are the minimum maintenance standards. There are a number of fairly complex regulations and design parameters that are required for any road development. Is that accurate?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Yes. We've worked closely with the ministry to create the Ontario Traffic Manual Book 18 for cycling facility designs. So we've partnered in that design process.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Would you describe that as a living document? That manual is something that is evolving, and it is moving forward pretty much all the time to continue to be updated and reflect the current situation—the population growth or things of that nature, or changes in technology, upgraded road materials etc. Do you agree that that manual is a moving, living thing?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: In particular, to improve road safety, engineers across the province have been updating those guidelines for increased protected infrastructure, yes.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Just before you, we had the gentlemen in from Good Roads and from AMO, and there was lots of conversation about just how complex dealing with congestion, dealing with the growth and the traffic requirements is and how many different pieces—I think we would all acknowledge that there is no single silver bullet that's going to solve any of these issues. Correct?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Correct. It's important for municipalities to work with the province on the levers that we each have in place to manage traffic congestion.

Mr. Ric Bresee: One of the tools that was mentioned, certainly, was the idea of transit, and I think both of you mentioned the growth in transit as a beneficial thing.

This province has invested, I believe, \$28 billion in transit. We have numerous transit projects across the province. We have a number of them very focused on Toronto and the GTHA as a whole. Those programs, again—that huge investment from the tax dollars of the people of the province of Ontario.

Do you believe that those are important investments and part of the solution towards the congestion challenges that we see?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Absolutely. They're critical. Ontario has invested more in transit than anywhere else right now. Key transit projects like the Crosstown and

Finch LRT include cycling infrastructure alongside those corridors as part of their design and construction on arterial roads.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I know that much of the discussion around the table today has been with regard to bike lanes, but I'm going to divert a little bit.

Part of this piece of legislation is about expediting highway construction; about expediting those key priority projects that make sure that we can avoid—you mentioned the idea that it's construction that's in many cases causing some of the road congestion.

Would you agree with the idea that that is a temporary situation based on—especially when we're rebuilding the Gardiner, when we're rebuilding a number of highways and roads around the city, the purpose of that is to actually improve the situation even though, on a temporary basis, it is sometimes causing that type of congestion?

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Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: In building new infrastructure, yes. If we're talking about dismantling existing cycling infrastructure, I'd disagree with you.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Construction is construction. I'll go with that side of it.

All of that said, this is a massive investment that the province is putting into the city of Toronto, into transit, into highways, even to the point of, say, the One Fare program that has reduced the cost to all of the users that are coming into and out of Toronto to encourage that transit system. It's encouraging that use of the transit system.

Again, I will ask: Is it a good thing for the city of Toronto to be supported in that way for its transit?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Yes. All three of the corridors that the province has identified for bike lane removal have transit underneath them, and multimodal trips are something that people who move within the city of Toronto need as part of their transportation options.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Ultimately, you're agreeing that those huge investments that the province is making into the city of Toronto are tremendously beneficial to the city of Toronto?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Yes, I agree that the investments in transit are tremendously beneficial for our future as a city.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I appreciate that. As I say, part of this bill is making sure we can expedite those pieces, expedite the processes of building our highways, setting our priorities for highways to make sure that they can be done very quickly, and the example being, which we keep on hearing, that the Gardiner Expressway is four months ahead of schedule right now.

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: It is.

I note that the Gardiner is not one of the highways identified as a priority in this bill. The city of Toronto hasn't made a position on any of the highway legislation related to this bill. Our position is strictly about the bike lane framework component.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Just if I may, how much time do I have?

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: There were a number of options that have been put forward as ideas, I'll put it that way. Again, one of the previous presenters suggested adding—I believe the term he used was a “car fee,” as many of the large cities across the world have done. Ultimately, it's a new tax to discourage cars from coming into a downtown core. I know the city of London in England has done that. There are others around. This would be yet another tax, yet another fee when we've reduced fares, when we've reduced tolls and frozen fees for cars etc., frozen fees for the people that need that relief in the current climate when the cost factors to people are just so high right now. Would you encourage—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Your 60 seconds went by quick. I'm sorry.

Mr. Ric Bresee: That was 60 seconds? Wow.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's time.

We'll now go over to the official opposition. MPP French, please go ahead.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would address my questions regarding the 413 to Mr. Forman. Schedule 3 would exempt Highway 413 from the requirement under section 3(5)(a) of the Planning Act that ministry decisions be consistent with provincial policies and plans, which includes the greenbelt plan. It's important to understand that highway infrastructure is already allowed within the greenbelt under the greenbelt plan, under section 5(j) of the Greenbelt Act, to “ensure that the development of transportation and infrastructure proceeds in an environmentally sensitive manner.” In other words, the current law effectively says, “You can build a highway through the greenbelt, but it must be done in an environmentally sensitive manner.”

By exempting Highway 413 from the need to be consistent with the greenbelt plan, this government is effectively and explicitly saying it doesn't intend to develop Highway 413 in an environmentally sensitive manner. There's no reason for the government to create a new statute establishing a replacement EA process, which begs the question of what they are hoping to accomplish.

In your professional opinion, what would you anticipate—I won't ask you to speculate why they're doing it, but I'm going to ask you, what will be the impact on, say, species at risk, migratory birds, impacts on inland fish species, navigable waters and responsibility for First Nations and Indigenous treaty rights?

Mr. Gideon Forman: I think the short answer is, they'll all be trampled. There are dozens of federally protected species at risk along the route of the highway. This is not contentious at all. Their future is certainly imperiled. It's disgraceful that First Nations peoples' concerns will be essentially ignored by the processes being put in place. I mean, how much time do you have? Whether it's the natural world, First Nations peoples, farmers—all of them will be adversely impacted by this highway, not to mention the impacts on the climate and the fabulous economic cost. All of those will be harmful and this legislation fast-tracks it.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you. You did very well to wrap that up.

I'm going to hand it over to my colleague.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm going stay with you, Mr. Forman, and I'll go to the city of Toronto in just a moment. You are one of the province's experts on public transit and policy opportunities for public transit. I noted in the last round of questioning that it was asserted that Toronto is the beneficiary of a lot of provincial investments, but I just wondered if you could clarify for the committee: To my understanding, a lot of that investment is in capital projects. It's in building up projects that are being constructed past deadline and over budget.

The city of Toronto, as I understand it, has found some money to go into its operational funds of public transit, but I know in my city, in Ottawa, we're short \$120 million and we've had to hike monthly seniors' passes by 120% as a consequence, and some 74,000 fewer transit services hours this year. I'm wondering if you can clarify for the committee if that's in fact the case.

Mr. Gideon Forman: Yes, that certainly makes sense. You're more the expert in Ottawa than I am, Mr. Harden, but your general point is exactly right: The province is very fond of putting large dollars into capital projects, but what transit agencies—not just in Ontario, but indeed across the country—have been telling me is that they need more money for the day-to-day operations.

Things like hiring drivers, maintaining vehicles, making sure that they're operating properly and this sort of thing: That's the money that transit agencies right across Canada, from Vancouver to Halifax, are saying they need. That's where we really need to be putting more money, is the operating dollars. It's not glamorous money, Mr. Harden. You don't cut any ribbon when you hire drivers, but if you're not willing to hire drivers and put money into proper maintenance, you're not going to run your transit system very well.

Mr. Joel Harden: Understood. Thank you for the clarification.

Let's step outside Queen's Park for a second. There's a major event enveloping the city called Taylor Swift. Taylor Swift has necessitated the city of Toronto, as I understand it, to reallocate the understanding of how you move around in this town. It would be improbable to think about a car-centric approach right now to getting around the city of Toronto thanks to, as my daughter might say, the genius of Taylor Swift. As I understand it, \$282 million will be introduced into our city as a consequence of that economic development.

I'm wondering, looking at the city of Toronto for a moment: Is this not a bit of a larger story where we can see how you've imaginatively thought about how you can accommodate this extra traffic in the downtown? Does this not suggest more opportunities for choice in how you get around the city, as opposed to what the government seems to be proposing, more highways, more of one kind of

mode? I'm just wondering if you could comment further from the city of Toronto's perspective.

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Sure. Thank you for that point of view and that question. The provincial planning policies are really clear that we need to be intensifying in major transit station areas to accommodate growth. As I stated in my remarks, the provincial planning policies state that we cannot require minimum parking requirements along corridors where we have these key cycling corridors that you've mentioned, as well as major transit lines, because of the need to accommodate people's mode choice that's shifting.

We know that it's in both the planning that's happening from a very broad provincial level, instituted in municipalities like ours, as well as that it's playing out in the market, because developers are building more bike parking spaces than they are car parking. It's also playing out in the way that the mode share is changing within our city. If we compare the previous Transportation Tomorrow Survey data from 2011 to 2016, we saw 46% more people biking and then from 2016 to 2022, 24% higher, the trend is continuing that the mode shift is taking place. We need to plan for the growth and the investment in our city at large in the way we build a 21st-century city.

The planning policies that the provincial government has—support that. Let's make sure that the Bill 212 amendments are aligned with that, which as they are currently proposed, they are not.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I'll just note for the record again—trying for levity in an afternoon where we're going to have difficult conversations, Chair—that we may lose the next Taylor Swift conference if we decide to only cater to one form of transportation, if we don't allow municipalities to use the advice that they have to build the proper kind of infrastructure—you mentioned the hospital sector of University Avenue. We already heard from businesses along Bloor Street.

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I'm just wondering if it's worth it—because I have always understood Conservatives to be very driven by economics—to communicate today there's an economic consequence to limiting choice.

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: The economic consequence is something that we're seeing in the scale of congestion. That's a problem that the province is trying to solve with this bill, but it's somewhat short-sighted because the growth that we're trying to accommodate in multimodal transportation choices is longer-term, and in order for people to continue to feel safe making those choices, using transit and cycling as modes, particularly—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm afraid we're out of time. Thank you very much.

MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I think we all respect doctors, and we're very worried about the 2.5 million Ontarians without family doctors. It keeps us up at night—some of us.

Maybe you've seen this, Gideon and Jacquelyn, but there's a list of 122 ER doctors who have written in. They support safe cycling infrastructure. They support active transportation for many reasons, least of all so they're not having to rescue someone in their hospital who has had a collision, unfortunately.

We also have a letter of support for the University bike lanes going in from the CEO of Mount Sinai and the CEO of Toronto's Sick Children's Hospital. They did a survey with their employees back in the day and found that 63% of staff said they cycle to work, and 80% of the people surveyed want more protected bike lanes.

What do you make of that for the University bike lanes and any bike lanes? Should we heed their advice?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Doctors in our community are certainly thought leaders. We've heard of that letter. We have spoken from representatives from all three of the University Health Network, Mount Sinai and SickKids hospital in planning and designing the University Avenue bike lanes. We know there's support within their organizations in terms of their staff but also because of the duty for care that they have for communities.

I've spoken at public meetings on these projects with trauma doctors who have experience trying to save someone who has been in a horrific crash with a motor vehicle, and they want bike lanes in order to provide more safety.

I will note I'm not sure what the problem is that we're trying to solve around removing bike lanes on University in particular. The data that we have does not demonstrate that there are congestion-related delays on University. They're well used. The adjacent hospitals are supportive of them. It would cost millions of dollars and multiple years of construction to remove them. We're not talking about paint and signs here; we're talking about fully reconstructed roads. So I think it's really important for this committee and the government, in choosing whether or not to move forward with this amendment, to decide: Is it actually worth all that money, because what problem will it solve? Is there a problem to solve, and how will it impact people's lives?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, well, I think they're listening intently over there, for sure.

Gideon, your thoughts on that? And then I'm going to quickly ask you a Highway 413 question.

Mr. Gideon Forman: To Jacquelyn's point, absolutely; our doctors, our nurses are thought leaders, and they agree. I mean, my goodness, if you've had the tragedy of having a child in your ER who has been hit by a car when she was on her bicycle, you know that whatever we spend on bike lanes is well worth the dollars.

I'll also say that the savings in terms of health costs is enormous if we keep people out of hospitals, so there's a good human health reason and there's a good economic reason for expanding the bike lane network.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great. Thank you.

And then over to Highway 413: What do you think the reasoning is, Gideon, for this government—they want to avoid environmental assessments on that highway. Do you

think it's about the 29 federally listed endangered species? They're thinking that that's going to—heaven forbid some biodiversity might hold up your paving paradise. I can't for the life of me think of why they're doing that, can you?

Mr. Gideon Forman: I don't have any special insight into their thinking, but I think that if we did a proper environmental impact assessment of the route, and this is over 50 kilometres through some of the most important green areas in southern Ontario, we would find all sorts of reasons not to go ahead with the highway: dozens of protected species; waterways that would be crossed, including navigable waterways; wetlands that would be threatened; and on and on. We don't have a lot of green space left in southern—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, but we're out of time.

We have to move over to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It's great to see both presenters here today sharing their opinions on some important work that's happening in Ontario. I'd like to direct my conversation to the David Suzuki Foundation and begin with you.

I've had the opportunity to speak with your organization before when I was in the role of MPP Bresee, as the parliamentary assistant. We got to have a lot of good conversations regarding your opinions on a lot of the work that we're doing. I would say, in some cases we had some agreements; in some cases, we had some disagreements. But that's okay—that's how every intellectual society operates.

There's a lot of things in this particular bill. I know we're focusing a lot on bike lanes because that's the hot topic of the day but there's a lot of items in this particular bill. I wanted to ask you, is there anything inside this bill that you support?

Mr. Gideon Forman: With all due respect, there was nothing that I saw that could be supported because it's essentially a bill that's designed to fast-track an unnecessary highway and to rip out bike lanes.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: So I'll just ask in between here: When this bill talks about maintaining the freeze on the costs of obtaining a driver's licence or writing a written exam and things like that at DriveTest Ontario, do you support that freeze or do you not support that freeze?

Mr. Gideon Forman: We don't have any opinion on that. I'm just here to talk about Highway 413 and the bike lane piece. That's my area of expertise.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: No problem, no problem. I can redirect conversation back to Highway 413.

I do understand the David Suzuki Foundation has done their own level of research and their own conversation with people who live around the area. I have as well. I'm from that particular area. Highway 413 is going to be built a couple of minutes away from my home. I travel that entire stretch from the 400 to the 401 very frequently.

My question, really, here comes back to the highway. When the foundation comes in to have these conversa-

tions, have you yourself visited and driven the area where the highway is going to be built?

Mr. Gideon Forman: That's an excellent question. I've actually walked part of the route near Kleinburg. So I've walked the actual area that would be paved, yes. I've spoken to farmers who live near the—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: So that's one of the intersections, then. Did you notice that a lot of the area itself is empty and farmers are not actually using it?

Mr. Gideon Forman: That wasn't my experience when I was there. I wouldn't call it empty. It's farmland and forest.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Absolutely.

So now, when we talk about highways, previously you were speaking to us about using existing infrastructure, using existing highways and using those facilities more—or you're supportive of those facilities.

So let's say, in a world today where—let's just pretend Highway 404 didn't exist. Would you support the construction of the 404 or would you not support the construction of the 404?

Mr. Gideon Forman: I mean, it's hypothetical. It depends where it was, it depends on its environmental impact. I can't—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Wherever it is right now—in the exact same spot.

Mr. Gideon Forman: Yes, but I'd have to look at what was there from a natural history point of view at the time they were considering building it: what impacts it would have on First Nations, what impacts it would have on the natural world—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: But it's there today. So if you were in the capacity to make a decision, would you support the Highway 404 or would you not support? Do you like the fact that it's there or do you not like the fact that it's there?

Mr. Gideon Forman: With all respect, I'd have to look at the value for money. I mean, I wouldn't make a decision about—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Excuse me. MPP Bell has a point of order.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Point of order: This is not relevant to the bill.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It is because we're comparing existing infrastructure—with his past conversation—with infrastructure that we're going to build going forward.

So in my opinion it is relevant, but that's okay, I can move on because we only have limited time and I'm sharing my time with MPP Logan Kanapathi.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I realize it's not a valid point of order but I do appreciate that we keep to the topic that Bill 212 is involving, please.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I agree. I'll move on with the conversation—no problem.

I appreciate your comments there and thank you for your feedback. I look forward to continuing our conversation on a different date.

With the couple of minutes I have left before I share my time, I would like to just ask a couple of questions to the city of Toronto.

I do understand your opposition to the government's move of removing bike lanes on major arteries. We've had this conversation all day today. But I really want to talk about the costs involved of removing these bike lanes. When we talk about installing these bike lanes, we're looking at around \$27 million. When we're looking at removing them, the city is estimating around \$48 million.

Why is the city estimating it at such a high value? Why is removing it going to cost more than installing it? I don't understand that portion of it, and I would like to see if you can maybe shed some light on that.

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: Absolutely, I can try to. It is quite complex, and it was brought together quite quickly, so I can't go line by line, but we don't have the time to do that either.

One thing to note is that when the segments of Bloor Street and University Avenue were reconstructed very recently, the cost of reconstructing those roads was bundled with water work that we also had to do at the same time, because in order to make efficient construction practices, we also do water main work at the same time as road work.

In the case of needing to rip up University and redo all of the mobilization of construction and all of the detour management and all of the aggregate and concrete, all of that work would only be paid by the city for this project and not shared with our Toronto Water infrastructure side of things. That's why the cost is a little bit different. That's one example.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: When you bring up the waterworks aspect of it, that is much more intrusive. You have to put in a lot more work to get the water mains and all that stuff redone.

When we look at the costs for some of the things that the city of Toronto announced last week, it's around \$3.8 million for several water line and road resurfacing projects. Even there, the costs are coming in at a lot lower than the cost of removing the actual bike lanes. Is this like a ballpark number the city came up with? Are there some facts or figures in there?

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: No, I wouldn't say it's a ballpark. I can describe it a little bit more deeply.

As I said, overall, what has been identified by the province has been three corridors—Bloor, Yonge and University—of which there are about 20 kilometres of bike lanes that we're talking about here. The province has not identified what segments are being targeted. There has been no criteria established as to which segments are of concern.

So the entirety of the cost is indicative of the fact that in sections that have been recently reconstructed, there are concrete curbs separating the bike lanes from the motor vehicle traffic. There are catch basins that have been moved as a result. In order to put back lanes with no spaces, you would have to redo the road.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sixty seconds left.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: So just to sum up, there's still a lot more cost estimation left to do to finalize the cost of what the bike lane removal would be. Don't get me wrong against what was said earlier—I'm not challenging your competence at all. I do believe that you're very competent in the great work you guys do. I'm just talking facts and numbers. With departments, everybody varies. It doesn't matter which department you work for, numbers change all the time. Would this be an estimation by the city of what—

Ms. Jacquelyn Hayward: It's a preliminary estimate. It would be subject to tender, because we would be considering it being a competitive process for that—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: But it doesn't include—you don't really know the full scope of things yet, so you're not able to—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, you haven't said it.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: That's why I'm asking how the number came about at \$48 million.

How much time do we have left?

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I just want to thank the opposition for interrupting. I never interrupt when they speak, so continue to interrupt.

I appreciate all of you. Thank you for the 10 seconds, and thank you, both of you, for presenting today.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much to the presenters. Since we're a little ahead of schedule, we're just going to take a seven-minute break until 3 o'clock, and we'll reconvene with the next group of presenters. Thank you very much.

The committee recessed from 1453 to 1500.

MR. JEFF LEIPER

MS. LAINE JOHNSON

TORONTO COMMUNITY

BIKEWAYS COALITION

FRIENDS AND FAMILIES

FOR SAFE STREETS

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We will now resume the afternoon hearings for Bill 212. In this round, there are three presenters, and each speak for seven minutes. Just say your name before you start, and then we'll have question rotations as you might have seen: Jeff Leiper, Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition and Friends and Families for Safe Streets are our three presenters for the afternoon. I see two—have we got one virtually? Oh, they're there. The camera is on.

Jeff, if you don't mind starting, that would be great.

Mr. Jeff Leiper: My colleague Laine Johnson was to have joined us, but she is still in the witness verification room. If she could be let into that, that would be great. In the meantime, I'm happy to begin my presentation.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes, please.

Mr. Jeff Leiper: Yes. Thank you, Chair and committee members, for taking the time to review this legislation and for inviting us to speak today.

The city of Ottawa, with over a million residents, is geographically one of the largest municipalities in North America at over 6,700 square kilometres. Our road network is immense. We have over 12,500 lane kilometres of roads and, on a per capita basis, Ottawa has one of the largest communities of cyclists in Canada, despite our weather. About 2.5% of our residents travel by bike, many year round. We have over 900 kilometres of cycling facilities, including multi-use pathways, cycle tracks and on-road bike lanes.

The city of Ottawa is gradually building cycling routes and is especially focused on building links between routes so that a cycling commuter in, say, Stittsville can get to their job downtown without facing the risk of mixing with moving traffic. And I can tell you every kilometre of bike lane has been a fight. Road widenings, new roads and new highways get approved without fanfare, but bike lanes and paths are always challenged.

Today, Councillor Johnson and I would like to explore with you why we need safe, separated bike infrastructure and how that will help everyone who needs to get from point A to point B: cyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and drivers.

This legislation is going to slow down our progress in improving road safety for everyone, and it's why a majority of Ottawa city council signed a letter opposing Bill 212.

My colleague Councillor Johnson would now say:

I represent a ward in the former city of Nepean, once a bedroom community, now populated by many young families—like her own. My ward is made up of residential neighbourhoods, schools, jobs, shopping, recreation and parks all close by. For many families, there should be little need to drive the short distances required on a day-to-day basis, but with no safe alternatives they drive everywhere. They drive their kids to school, they drive to get a bag of milk and they drive to check the mail. What does that mean? I'm creating traffic for a short trip in my local neighbourhood—

Ms. Laine Johnson:—while you're trying to get to a medical appointment across town, and neither of us gets there faster. We slow everyone down when we don't build for different trips, using different transportation options. Parents come to me concerned with the traffic jams and unsafe maneuvers around schools at pick-up and drop-off. They also won't let their kids cycle or walk because there's too many cars.

How do you solve a riddle like that? It's by investing in safe, segregated infrastructure so residents can have real choices when it comes to how they want to travel through their neighbourhood. As it stands, we are all obligated to sit in traffic.

I'm personally not a big cyclist, and yet, this fall, I started taking my son to daycare by bike because I was sick of sitting in traffic, and I can tell you, it can be terrifying. Our older streets are wide and straight, and drivers can reach high speeds without even noticing. We

have a tremendous problem with speeding and also with street racing—and as an aside, I'd like to ask the committee to look at increasing penalties for street racing. It's become a problem that the police can't keep up with.

Let me use an example of Centrepointe Drive. It's a residential street with a school, a daycare, a library and two seniors' homes adjacent. It's four lanes wide, it looks like a racetrack, and families won't let their kids play in the front yard because of the speed. Staff have recommended we improve Centrepointe Drive by removing one lane in each direction and adding new pedestrian crossings and other alterations to help vehicles to slow down. Staff have recommended that the removed vehicle lanes be converted to bike lanes. But let me be clear: we aren't removing these lanes to build bike lanes. We're removing these lanes as a safety measure and taking advantage of that opportunity to add infrastructure. This is the plan that's been in the works for over 10 years, and it's a plan that's been brought to the public several times for input. It's a plan that has evolved with our understanding of the role of speed in fatalities and we aren't making decisions ideologically or independently from community consultation. We need to be able to respond to community safety needs.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now move over to the Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition. Please, go ahead.

Mr. Albert Koehl: Good afternoon. My name is Albert Koehl. I'm a coordinator with Community Bikeways. I'm an environmental lawyer and I've been engaged in community advocacy around a safe Bloor Street since 2007. I'm going to divide my frank comments into three brief sections: (1) the high cost of putting off action on traffic congestion, (2) scapegoating is not a serious policy response and (3) the high cost of removing safe road infrastructure.

First of all, traffic congestion isn't new in the GTA; it's only gotten worse with successive governments. A report by the Ministry of Transportation in 2006 conservatively put the cost of traffic congestion at \$5.5 billion. The solutions the ministry talked about then—the same solutions that perhaps the ministry would talk about today if asked—are to invest in transit, invest in active transportation, promote carpooling and HOV lanes, curb urban sprawl.

Unfortunately, putting off action is often the easy thing to do, but makes things more expensive. We have a great example in the Eglinton Crosstown. We know that in 1993, part of that project was approved by a previous government. At that time, it was part of a three-line, \$3-billion investment. It was cancelled by Premier Harris in 1995, with about \$100 million sunk into the project at that time. Today, more than a quarter century later, we're still waiting for that project to get finished.

Second, let's call Bill 212 what it is, which is a scapegoating of an identifiable group as the problem for road congestion. We get it: Traffic congestion is a real problem and it causes real frustration, not just in motorists, but also

the 60 people on GO buses coming into the city. But scapegoating city residents who ride bicycles is not a solution.

We get it: We've heard the minister say, "congestion," "gridlock," "\$11 billion" and "cycling" all in the same sentence, as if this is some kind of magical incantation that will solve traffic congestion, even though in Toronto, for example, less than 4% of roads have bike lanes. We also get it: Scapegoating is an effective distraction from a lot of other issues: the greenbelt, housing, homelessness. Those are the things that this government should be talking about.

So if there's a positive in any of this, it's that the minister has not really tried to dress up Bill 212 as a serious policy. He has not cited any research from the giant Ministry of Transportation; the data the ministry gave at the October 15 press conference was really just data that the well-heeled group of businessmen provided to him and had repeated on previous occasions. The solution at that time was a new layer of bureaucracy, more government in people's lives to provide approval for bike lanes that the cities had already studied. The minister at the time said, "We're not taking out any bike lanes, not on Bloor or any other streets." Days later, the Premier contradicted his own minister, essentially saying, "Forget the data. We're taking out bike lanes on Bloor, University and Yonge."

Third, removing safe infrastructure, such as bike lanes, won't remove people riding bicycles on arterial roads. It will simply deprive them of their safety. There is a misperception—I've heard it in this room today—about recreational cycling and utilitarian or everyday cycling: For many people, cycling is recreational; that means no destination in mind, just the ride itself is the goal. It's enjoyable. But we've known for 50 years—for a half a century—that the reason there's conflict over road space between motorists and cyclists is because motorists and cyclists are travelling at the same times of day, they're going to the same places and they're looking for the most direct route. So we've known that for half a century. We also know that riding a bike is convenient, affordable; it's vital, for example, to food couriers who are struggling to make a living.

1510

So while we focus, for example—and we know this is all about Bloor West and Etobicoke, where the Premier lives, and I don't think anyone has made any bones about that—in that corridor, only 20% of people actually move through that corridor in cars; 80% of people, most of them in transit, move as non-motorists. So why are we talking—and this is why cycling is such a useful wedge issue for those who want to exploit it—about those 20% of people when 80% of people are already moving with other means through that area?

So when we talk about good planning, we have to talk about not only people who are cycling now but prospective cycling, and that's the biggest pool of cycling in the city. So in the area we're talking about in Etobicoke, 22,000 people are moving into that area. Many of them are moving into buildings with very minimal car parking and

lots of bike parking. We've talked to people, not only in the Kingsway where the opposition is focused, but people that live in Toronto community housing that live in new condo buildings and older rental buildings where people could benefit from safe road infrastructure.

So let me end by saying, do we really want a small group of wealthy businessmen in the Kingsway making transportation policy for all of Ontario? So let's just call that what it is and what's happening. So Bill 212 won't solve traffic congestion, but it does diminish public confidence—

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

Mr. Albert Koehl:—in the MPPs that are sitting here today, it diminishes public confidence in them, it diminishes the dignity of the Premier's office when he listens to a small opposition group and repeats their figures and it undermines respect for our democracy. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now go to the Friends and Families for Safe Streets. Just state your name before you begin, please.

Ms. Jessica Spieker: My name is Jessica Spieker. I'm a spokesperson for Friends and Families for Safe Streets. We are a group of people whose loved ones have been struck and killed by a motorist, and people like me, who survived being struck with severe life-altering injuries. I got involved with this group after a reckless motorist crashed into me and nearly killed me as I was biking to work. She broke my spine, she inflicted a traumatic brain injury that still haunts me every day and she did so much soft tissue damage that I nearly died a second time of a massive bilateral pulmonary embolism. I nearly died twice not just because of one reprehensible individual but because of our systemic problem of badly designed streets. If I had been on a safe street, like the ones you want to destroy, I would have had a normal day instead of living with chronic pain and diminishment.

We're here today because every member of Friends and Families for Safe Streets is horrified and deeply, painfully distraught at the contents of Bill 212 that pertain to the destruction of existing complete streets and the prevention of building them in towns and cities across the province. The end result of this government pursuing this agenda will be more people killed and more families utterly devastated and shattered, along with more people whose lives and futures are destroyed by severe injuries.

If we go back to pre-installation rates of road violence on the streets you want to rip out, you can expect in five years, there will be nine people killed, 92 people with life-threatening, life-ruining injuries and probably a lot more than that because the mode share has shifted and more people are enjoying those streets without their cars.

So I want to say this to you as forcefully and as clearly as I possibly can: To wilfully inflict this fate, to make what happened to us happen to more and more people across this province is unspeakably callous, cruel and perversely immoral. If you rip out safe streets and obstruct them from being built, you will have blood on your hands, and that blood will not wash off.

My colleagues Vanessa and Kendrew are here to tell you more.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Please just state your name and go ahead.

Ms. Vanessa Gentile: Good afternoon, honourable committee members. My name is Vanessa Gentile. It's hard to believe that almost four years ago, on December 2, 2020, I got a phone call that my best friend, Alexandra Amaro, only 23 years old, was hit by three drivers and killed across from Dufferin Mall in Toronto. This phone call changed the trajectory of the so many lives she touched.

Alex was many things to many people: a daughter, a sister, a friend, a smile to a stranger crossing the street, a florist, a writer, a teacher and, above all, an empath. She was robbed of her life just because she was trying to get home, and she's why I'm here urging you to halt Bill 212. Ultimately, removing or halting bike lanes kills members of our community and further causes lifetime grief for crash survivors. As of today, six cyclists have been killed by drivers, making 2024 the deadliest year for cyclists in Toronto on record. According to a Share the Road cycling poll, 68% of Ontarians ride their bike at least once a month. It doesn't matter the reason why we choose to cycle, we all deserve to live safely and get home to our loved ones.

Ironically, it seems that the core reason for bike lane removal is about saving money and time, yet the cost associated with the removal of bike lanes on Bloor Street, Yonge Street and University Avenue and replacement with motor vehicle lanes is approximately \$48 million. What does that mean? Wasted money and wasted time. In return, more lives like Alex's are lost. Why are we not designating this to expanding public transportation and expanding our network of safe streets? I urge you, honourable committee, to look to your hearts and work to save lives instead.

Alex sent me a text I reread in all seasons regarding my late father on his death anniversary the last year she was here for me. Earlier, I was thinking about how lucky we are to have this lifetime with genuine, beautiful people. It's not fair that we lose those people. We don't have to face the unnecessary grief Alex referred to. We don't have to make words of consolation. We can celebrate life and live for all of those who we have unnecessarily lost by protecting our future. Please heed Alex's words and work to protect Ontarians, to make streets safer, not more dangerous.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. Is Kendrew going to be speaking?

Mr. Kendrew Pape: Yes. I am Kendrew Pape. This is my father, Gordon Pape. My sister, Kim, was killed while walking in a crosswalk on Mulock Drive in Newmarket. Kim was deaf. She was a recipient of the Terry Fox Humanitarian Award, a scholarship which is given to Canadians who emulate Terry's courage and determination. Kim was also a volunteer of the year at the Canadian Hearing Society.

When your family member is killed, along with the heartbreak there is a lot of paperwork. Among the docu-

ments I reviewed was Kim's autopsy report. It was so hard to read the description of my sister's fatal injuries, her exposed ribs and her shattered bones. I didn't want to believe that the broken body in the text was my sister, but I recognized her by a paragraph describing the old stroke in her brain, an injury at birth that had produced life-long deafness. Kim never even heard that car coming.

A 13-year-old girl was just killed in Ajax while riding her bike to school. I sobbed, thinking of the family receiving her autopsy report. A complete safe street with bike lanes and protected intersections would have saved that child's life, would have saved my sister's life. Under Bill 212, the Minister of Transportation could stop Newmarket or Ajax from making those life-saving upgrades to their streets.

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

Mr. Kendrew Pape: Respectfully, how does Mr. Sarkaria know what's best for the families that live there?

We needlessly lost a family member seven years ago. I lost a sister. My father lost a daughter. Mr. Bresee, you also lost a daughter seven years ago. I'm sorry for your loss. It hurts so much when a loved one dies prematurely. You start working to prevent families from experiencing similar tragedies. That's why I volunteer with Friends and Families for Safe Streets—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We're out of time.

We'll now move over to the official opposition for the first round. MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank all of our guests for joining us this afternoon. Again, I just want to remind the room that we began the day, sadly, with the silencing of the member for Kitchener Centre, who, for some reason, given rules we have before the House, is not allowed to participate in this debate. We were told—and I want to thank the family members with direct lived experience of what unsafety looks like in our communities, but I was not allowed to present those photos to this committee. MPP Rae, in particular, from Perth–Wellington, objected to it, so there has been a dedicated space that we've created on our MPP website in Ottawa Centre: joelhardenmpp.ca/faces_of_road_violence.

1520

I want to point to Alex Amaro who was mentioned in the deputation—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Harden, you just need to refer to members by their riding name.

Mr. Joel Harden: I understand.

Alex Amaro is pictured there—someone, as we already heard, with a bright future who contributed a lot to our community.

I also want to note that there's a picture, if you scroll to the bottom, of Ms. Spieker in intensive care. I don't want government members to look away from this. I want you to look it straight in the eye because when you play culture wars with people's safety, when you bullheadedly stam-pede with legislation with no basis in evidence, you may score some points on talk radio shows and you may get

some likes and shares on social media, but it's these folks that are going to pay the price—it's these folks.

Ms. Spieker, I mentioned this morning when the minister was here that you organized a world day of remembrance right outside this building on Sunday night. I want you to say to this room and to this committee and to the government very clearly what were other stories you heard from other folks who came forward to talk about how their lives were forever changed because of this work we have yet to do to make our communities safe.

Ms. Jessica Spieker: Thank you. We heard from a naturopathic doctor named Leslie Solomonian, who was run down from behind and received such a significant brain injury that she can no longer continue in her vocation. She was a high-achieving doctor and a triathlete, and she is living in diminishment now and trying to figure out what to do with her life because she does not have the mental faculties to continue as a doctor or as an instructor.

We heard from Patrick Ridgen, whose mother was killed in Stratford by a turning driver who hit both his mother and his father, but his mother succumbed to her injuries after two and a half weeks in the hospital with her family by her side. Stratford has since made that street safer by reallocating space away from cars in a way that this bill would consider undoing and making that street more dangerous—more mothers getting killed.

We heard from the Amaro family through the letter that they wrote to you. We heard from a woman named Patty Heideman—whose brother Mark was killed on Highway 7 riding his bike, also run down from behind at such high speed that it was not survivable—about how much and how desperately his family misses him and wishes he was still here with us.

It was a litany of heartbreak, and we cannot, as a society, purchase driving convenience with people's lives and keep inflicting these tragedies on more and more people.

If I may go on, I want to point out to you that across Ontario, between 2015 to 2023, 5,216 people who were all beloved by their families and members of communities were killed in car crashes, and that devastation was 100% preventable. A truly jaw-dropping 392,904 people were injured in car crashes, ranging from minor injuries to life-threatening injuries.

This province has a road safety crisis on its hands. We cannot move forward with making streets more dangerous. If you want to save lives and improve lives and give people more time with their families, they have to get home safe. If Ontario's streets are not safe, Ontarians are not safe, and to attack road safety is to attack every Ontarian.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Ms. Spieker.

I want to go to Councillor Leiper from Ottawa. Thank you very much for joining us. I want to mention, Councillor, because you're familiar with this story, the story of Audrey Cameron, a 16-year-old scooter user who was crossing Carling Avenue who was hit and knocked 13 feet into the air—her pelvis shattered, critical brain injuries. Again, if you go to the same website I mentioned earlier, Chair, joelhardennpp.ca/faces_of_road_violence, you will

see a picture of Audrey in intensive care, submitted by her parents to the Ottawa Citizen.

Councillor Leiper, can you talk about the impact of making sure that road safety exists—

Interruption.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Harden, I'm sorry. The bells are ringing and we have to go.

Mr. Joel Harden: What happens to the—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We're just going to recess for 15 minutes and we can resume.

Mr. Joel Harden: Apologies, Councillor Leiper. We'll be back.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, but the bells are ringing and we have to go for a vote—so 15 minutes.

The committee recessed from 1525 to 1541.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll resume the committee hearings. There's one minute and 40 seconds left on the clock for the official opposition. MPP French, one minute and 40 seconds left in this round. I believe Mr. Harden is telling you that you're up.

Mr. Joel Harden: No. I was just wondering if the deputers were on the screen.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Oh, sorry. They're still there.

Mr. Joel Harden: Just back to you, Councillor Leiper, I was talking about the case of Audrey Cameron, the terrible accident that happened, an incident collision on Carling Avenue of which you are aware, and how you mentioned in your presentation that it is difficult to advance the case of road safety and protected infrastructure in the best of times. Any advice you can provide the government on the need to make sure that this is evidence-driven, from our planning department in Ottawa, for example, that does that work for you?

Mr. Jeff Leiper: Thank you very much, MPP Harden. The city of Ottawa spends considerable money as part of the official planning process on the transportation master plan that seeks to balance how people move around the city across all of the different modes, and it's a holistic look at how people are getting from A to B. I take a look at, for example, Parkdale and Merivale in our ward, Joel, and there is no bike lane to blame for the congestion that we have.

We're trying to put all the various different parts of the network into balance with one another, and bike lanes are a part of that. I think that local decision-making is really important and not something that Queen's Park can do without the intimate understanding of the local transportation conditions here.

Mr. Joel Harden: Fair enough.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Councillor Leiper, again, this government is in a big rush with this bill. Because of time allocation, your own colleague Councillor Johnson had to be cut off from this stream. The member for Kitchener Centre is not allowed to speak. When we make decisions about road safety in Ottawa, are we in a rush like this?

Mr. Jeff Leiper: The TMP process, the transportation master plan, takes a couple of years to do. There are con-

sultations through multiple rounds. There is an expensive exercise of gathering data in order to put together our TMP.

No, it's not a rushed process, which is why I would hope that the minister would defer to the local expertise, the local evidence gathering that's done here—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. I'm sorry. We're out of time on this round. I apologize.

MPP McMahon, you can start your four and a half minutes when you're ready, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure. Is everyone still there on Zoom? Yes? I just want to apologize for the interruption because it was at a horrible time, as you were sharing your heartfelt stories.

I'd like to acknowledge Jess. Thank God you're still with us. Thank you for your bravery in coming here today. I can't imagine how hard it is to tell your story over and over again, especially for this bill.

To Vanessa, you're doing your friend proud by being here. That's tough to do as well.

Ken, with your sister, Kim, I just give you kudos for having the bravery and courage to come.

We all received Alex Amaro's parents' letter, and I hope you heard them on CBC—it was very heartfelt—and also, the sister, Rebecca. The thing that stood out for me of many things was Alex's dad saying that they definitely want motorists to get home safely, but they also want everyone to get home safely. There's no value on—because we're all people: people who walk, people who choose to cycle, people who choose to take transit and people who choose to drive. Many of us do all of them.

My question to all of you guys is—we have a letter from 122 ER doctors who wholeheartedly support bike lanes for many, many reasons, and I can imagine, in ERs, when they come upon a cyclist who they're trying to resuscitate from a collision, what goes through their minds, and that's why they are signing these letters. They want to keep us all safe. There are also letters from the CEOs of Mount Sinai Hospital and SickKids supporting the University bike lanes.

Just your thoughts on these medical professionals who are supporting the lanes. We'll just do it rapid fire, because I realize I've taken too long of my four and a half minutes. Jess?

Ms. Jessica Spieker: I think they know exactly what they're talking about. It was at Mount Sinai, which I was taken to, which is a hospital on hospital row. We know that many of the health care workers bike there. The doctors who treated me, they need to get to work safely too. I actually think a majority of doctors bike to work on hospital row. So to rip out that safe street and imperil all of those lives, I cannot understand any rationale where that makes sense.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes. We have the facts: Mount Sinai surveyed and 63% of staff cycle to work and 80% want more protected bike lanes.

Vanessa and Ken, your thoughts on all these doctors and CEOs who are telling us the bike lanes are important? Any thoughts on that? Should we heed their advice?

Mr. Kendrew Pape: Yes, we absolutely should, MPP McMahon. What strikes me is a report I just saw, actually, from the Bloor Annex business improvement association in which the business leaders of that community have shared that they have seen a huge increase in the number of monthly visitors at their businesses and the amount of money that's being spent at those businesses. There is a lot of evidence that shows that the destinations that are in our city centres, that are in our business centres, they're of great value to the people who live and work in those communities.

It's not enough to just have the lanes being right there—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, thanks, Ken. Sorry, I have to cut you off because Vanessa might not have enough time.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Twenty-five seconds, Vanessa.

Ms. Vanessa Gentile: Well, of course, it adds credibility to the argument of having less people in the ER, having less people like Jess, who was tragically injured, having less mortalities as well as the physical toll, the emotional toll. I'd love to see statistics on mental health resources for people who have—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, but your time is up on the committee.

Moving to the government side. MPP Rae, please go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to all the presenters for your presentations this afternoon.

I know if you've been listening to the member from Ottawa Centre, it will sound like I don't want to have debate. I'm here to have debate, Chair. I also adhere to the standing orders, and the member earlier, for the record, wanted to use props at committee today, which is not allowed in the chamber and obviously not allowed at committee. That is the debate we were having earlier today, and the motion we passed earlier around the member from Kitchener Centre was in the House. Again, I'm happy to have a debate about standing orders when that comes up if there are proposals from the independent members and the members of the opposition.

We're here to talk about a very substantive piece of legislation, obviously. A lot of the discussion today is around cycling, which is very important to many people in the province of Ontario, but there are also many other initiatives within that bill.

My question to our councillor from Ottawa, Jeff Leiper, I was just wondering—I know identified in the bill right now are some GTA highway projects, speeding up those approvals, but obviously looking at getting more infrastructure built across Ontario. Would a streamlined process be beneficial to the city of Ottawa to get highways and roads built in your city that you represent?

1550

Mr. Jeff Leiper: I think there are elements of this bill that speak to an easier expropriation process as well. Certainly, that's something that we are looking at in my ward in Ottawa, where there's a significant Queensway rehab exercise that's under way. I have not read the details of

that. I am here today to address the bike lanes issue in Bill 212.

I do have some concerns about bypassing community consultation in those expropriations for the infrastructure, particularly in very crowded, tight-knit neighbourhoods like the ones I represent. But in general, absolutely, having a relatively friction-free process of building civil infrastructure, particularly for bike lanes, is important.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thanks, Jeff. I know the proposal before us, talking about bike lanes, would continue to allow municipalities to construct new bike lanes on municipal roads where a lane of traffic does not need to be removed, with no approval required on that aspect.

You've made your opinion very clear, at least in your role as a councillor at the city of Ottawa. I was just wondering, how would you balance the government's objectives around tackling gridlock and making life easier for drivers with your concerns around the removal of bike lanes?

Mr. Jeff Leiper: I think the bike lanes are a red herring in this discussion. Congestion in a city like Ottawa that is going to grow by another half million people over the course of the next 20 years or so is going to be the result of more and more cars on our streets. We have to provide people with alternatives to driving if we're going to be sustainable as a city. That means ensuring that we can get good public transportation as well as active transportation.

Every cyclist who is on one of these bike lanes is a car that is not on the streets. As we grow by hundreds of thousands of people in the course of the next several decades, that's going to be important.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Jeff. Just building off the line of questioning around bike lanes, I know we mentioned the ease of potentially streamlining for highway infrastructure, for example. Are there other obstacles for reducing gridlock? You're at committee today and, as you may or may not know, I am the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, so I'm happy to pass along your feedback to Minister Calandra.

Are there other initiatives, like making driving easier, expanding access to high-speed Internet, infrastructure? There are lots of discussions with the Ministry of Infrastructure as well—getting rural broadband, obviously. Ottawa is a very large city, as you know very well, with a lot of rural components. Are there other obstacles in the way that the province should look at to reduce gridlock in some of those initiatives to get rural broadband, for example, built?

Mr. Jeff Leiper: Rather than focusing on making it more difficult to build bike lanes that reduce congestion, I would suggest one of the interesting initiatives could be to continue to work with the province, and we have that partnership already, in terms of building more housing that is near transit. Things like incentives at the provincial level—the city is struggling to afford to convert office buildings that are near transit stations into housing. More people living near transit means less of a need to drive, which means less congestion. There are a lot of land use

planning levers that we could pull in order to reduce congestion.

Mr. Matthew Rae: How much time left, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You've got two and a half minutes.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Jeff, I was just wondering if you could comment. I don't know if you were watching the proceedings earlier. It's come up earlier today around Ottawa's new deal with the province of Ontario, over \$500 million. I just wanted to know if you could explain how that has been beneficial to the city of Ottawa in helping get infrastructure built. Operational costs, I was also understanding, were a component of it. I was just wondering if you could elaborate a bit on that.

Mr. Jeff Leiper: Yes. Certainly, some of the councillors in the suburban wards have been the beneficiaries of new road infrastructure that will be built with that. In the downtown or more urban wards, there is money that is being put into addressing the housing and opioid crisis. We're hoping to see the money start flowing soon because there is an urgent need for it.

The missing piece is still the transit money. There is a fairly large hole in our transit budget, which we are looking to the province to partially help us deal with this, as we have a systemic ridership issue coming out of the lockdowns and the pandemic where the ridership is not sufficient.

We need a new deal between cities and the other levels of government on the operating side, which is not something that provincial and federal governments are nearly as quick to try to provide to municipalities, but which, right now, would make a big difference to us.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Very quickly then, Jeff: Would it be beneficial if the federal government changed its work-from-home policies? Because I know in downtown Ottawa—I lived in downtown Ottawa at one point. Would it be beneficial?

Mr. Jeff Leiper: Yes, so certainly the highest-congestion days are associated with work from home. I am not a proponent of forcing workers to come back five days a week; I think that we saw a lot of quality-of-life improvements in people not having to fight that congestion on the days where they do work from home. With three days working from home, we see the difference that it makes in people's quality of life. On Wednesday, when everybody is on the road going into the office, those are really hellish days to try to get around by whatever mode, be it transit, be it driving or by bike.

I think that the feds have found a reasonable balance for the time being, and I would not be a proponent of trying to bring workers back for five days a week just for the sake of getting riders on the bus.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We're now going to move to the next round.

Seven and a half minutes for the official opposition: MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm sharing my time with MPP French, so I do encourage your answers to be succinct so we can share.

I also want to thank all of you for coming and speaking today at committee. It is very difficult when you've had a tragedy in your lives. When you've lost a loved one, it is very difficult to come and speak and organize, so I'm recognizing your courage today. It's very hard.

I also want to point out there are many more people who signed up to speak to Bill 212 today. I have never seen more people apply to speak to a bill in my entire six years, even more than Bill 23. It was astronomical. It is a pity we only have one day to hear testimony. It's a pity, because this issue is deeply felt by a lot of people. I think it is very important that we have a serious conversation about how to reduce congestion and keep our roads safe, instead of having the Premier make impulsive and emotional decisions based on what he sees when he drives to work.

I have one question. It's to Albert Koehl and then it's to Jessica Spieker. Instead of removing bike lanes, what can we do to address the serious congestion issues we have in Toronto? Albert, I'll point to you first.

Mr. Albert Koehl: Well, I don't think it's any secret. I think if we're going to have a serious conversation, this bill is a non-starter. But if we wanted to have a serious conversation about congestion, we would talk about more investment in transit. I mean, transit has got to be the anchor if you're going to have a good functioning system: more investment in transit, more investment in active transportation and also finding ways to encourage people to carpool, to leave the car at home or to use alternate modes. So I think that would be a useful starting point if we were serious about tackling congestion.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Jess Spieker?

Ms. Jessica Spieker: Car congestion is a problem because there are too many cars. We need alternatives that are safe and convenient and appealing alternatives to cars.

We need improved inter-regional rail connections. Like, I can't take a train to visit my family in Kitchener-Waterloo because it would take four hours. Why aren't we investing in getting people out of their cars, alleviating congestion on the 401? I would rather take a train than drive, but I don't have that option because of underinvestment in the GO system.

We can get the Eglinton Crosstown running, because that's almost ready to have its quinceañera party, it's been so long under construction.

We need to expand complete streets on Ontario roads into our outer suburbs, where 30% of households do not even own a car. Those people deserve safe and affordable transportation, and there is no transportation more affordable than walking and riding a bike. People can't afford housing. Food is difficult to afford. To force people to drive cars because there is no safe convenient alternative is immoral, and I don't think it's good governance.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I also want to acknowledge the important truths that we've been hearing today—yes, emotional, but very, very important for the committee to hear.

We have not seen any incorporation or consideration of vulnerable road user legislation—certainly not in this. I've been debating Bill 197; this government is not willing to have the conversation around vulnerable road users. They can tell us that they are, but section 4, which is attacking bike lanes, doesn't even use the word "safety."

1600

When it comes to those vulnerable road users, in this case, I'm going to talk about those who would use bike lanes; I'm going to separate them out from first responders and construction workers, those who are also vulnerable on our roads. What I see is that this government is wishing them away, imagining if they erase bike lanes from direct routes and arteries that those folks who would use bike lanes are now going to disappear onto these mythical secondary streets. As more and more people continue to cycle or use wheelchairs in bike lanes, now they're not going to have protective infrastructure.

I'm going to go out on a limb here, and the government members can correct me: I do not see that evidence is the language of this government. I would say that perhaps affordability and economics is more the language. So can you speak to the affordability or the economics for those who would use bike lanes and help the government understand that there are other perspectives?

We heard businesses today: There will be more foot traffic if people can stop pedalling and start shopping. People who don't feel safe to cycle are going to have to buy a car. How much more economical is that for them? And with all the housing being built in Toronto, are they being built with driveways for cars? Just help us through some of the, I'm going to say, language of government, which, I'm going to say, is dollars and nonsense today. Please go ahead.

Ms. Jessica Spieker: We know that it's a provincial directive that housing is being built along major arterial roads and transit corridors, and is being built without car parking included, with bike parking spaces. We also know that our condo market is in a super slump. When developers are marketing condo developments, pre-con projects, all of their materials include people riding bikes happily and safely on a complete street in front of that building. This legislation completely undermines the initiative to reduce car dependence, because it doesn't allow safe alternatives to driving a car to be built on arterial roadways.

Also, for low-income earners like me—because my capacity to earn was devastated by my injuries, I earn below the poverty line. I save thousands of dollars a year on gas and car maintenance, because I can ride my bike for the cost of a bowl of oatmeal, essentially. For me to be forced back in my car—because I will not ride when there are not bike lanes, so if the complete streets are ripped out, that will put me in my car almost 100% of my trips, wasting my money on gas and increased maintenance

costs. I will not be reimbursed for those. That will make my life worse, and not better, and that is true across every low-income person who, by the skin of their teeth, affords a car in the first place. I save so much money and I know lots of people do too.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: And if you suddenly find yourself back in a car—

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: —is that going to help with congestion?

Ms. Jessica Spieker: It will make congestion worse. It will make my personal health worse. It will make pollution worse. It will make everything worse. It will increase health care costs, infrastructure costs—it doesn't make any sense. If we want to conserve—conserve human life, conserve money—we have to look at alternatives to cars.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Mr. Koehl.

Mr. Albert Koehl: I should say quickly, a lot of the area we've talked about over the last month has been in Etobicoke, and we focus on the Kingsway. The Kingsway is a wealthy area; we get it. But there's also a large area there, a population concentration of Toronto Community Housing apartment buildings with lower-income individuals and new condos. We don't talk at all about them, but that's where the growth potential is: in low-cost, affordable transportation.

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

MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm also speaking for my colleague here, who's been muzzled and cannot speak, even though she represents a community of 105,000 people in Kitchener Centre. I'm just on the record that MPP Aislinn Clancy is here proudly representing her community in spirit.

This is the rhetoric you hear all the time: "We don't see anyone in the bike lanes." "No one bikes in the winter." "Emergency vehicles cannot get through the streets." "Bike lanes clog up the streets and they cause congestion." "Small businesses are dying and going out of business because of bike lanes."

What do you say to all of that rhetoric, Albert?

Mr. Albert Koehl: Well, I'd say first of all, one of the great advantages of the bicycle is also its greatest disadvantage, in terms of when we're having these conversations about congestion. Bicycles are small. They weigh—my bicycle weighs less than I do. And so people often don't see us. Because 20 bikes, we're stopping for a break, talk to each other. But 20 cars, that takes up quite a bit of room.

As I say, that is the disadvantage we have. So we hear sometimes people—even on Bloor and the busiest areas, 6,000 to 7,000, and more now, bikes—people still say to me there are no cyclists on Bloor Street. It is the great advantage of the bicycle: noiseless, pollution-less, very low cost and it doesn't take up very much room. So that's

why it doesn't get noticed in these conversations very much as a solution to congestion, not the problem.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

And Jess, your thoughts on that?

Ms. Jessica Spieker: It's all easily, verifiably false. Vélo Canada Bikes runs pedal polls. They go out and do counts. They click, click, click when a bike goes by and click, click, click when a car goes by. You feel like you don't see many bikes because they just go by quickly. They don't get stuck in congestion. Cars are enormous, and they take up a lot more visual space, and you come away with the impression that you saw a lot more cars than bikes, but it's not true. We have to rely on the evidence that we have, and the evidence is that having safe cycling facilities dramatically, by orders of magnitude, increases rates of cycling in neighbourhoods. And it might feel to other residents who don't ride bikes that no one's riding a bike, but people are riding bikes. If you actually go out and count, lots of people are.

The idea that bike lanes are causing congestion is so contradicted by evidence. I'm just going to leave that there because lots of other people have talked about it. The idea that it's hurting businesses? We have only data that they improve business outcomes. We haven't actually had any hard information from the businesses that are claiming otherwise, and in fact we saw this exact scenario play out on Bloor. The business owners there had some unpleasant times. They said "Oh, our business is going to be reduced. Oh, no." They found the exact opposite, and that is how it plays out every time when you install a complete street. That's just how it is.

And the idea nobody rides in the winter, bike share data is very robust. The system this year is expecting over six million rides. There is an abundance of data to counteract that nobody rides in the winter. We don't rip out playgrounds in the winter. We don't rip out car lanes, because people also drive less in the winter when it's not safe. Why are we talking about ripping out one form of infrastructure because of weather, and no other kind? I deserve to be safe when I ride in the winter just as much as if I ride in the summer.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Excellent. Good point about playgrounds.

Jeff, anything to add? Or Vanessa, or Ken?

Mr. Jeff Leiper: I went out with some volunteers recently to one of our busy intersections downtown to count the volume of bikes and cars, and 40% of the traffic at the sort of entrance of the Laurier bike lane was bikes, out of the 800 cars that arrived during a busy peak hour. Some of those riders arrived on safe, segregated cycling infrastructure; many of them did not. They're coming from all over the city—and this is into our most heavily congested areas—helping to alleviate congestion. I really worry about those who are not arriving on the safe, segregated cycling infrastructure. We put up two more ghost bikes just a couple of weeks ago here in Ottawa.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Four seconds left.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thanks. Thank you, everyone.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Over to the government side. MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to all of our presenters today for sharing a lot of their heartfelt stories. It's difficult to share these stories, even when you're sitting with your family, let alone to come online and share them with the rest of the world, so we thank you for your courage in coming here today and sharing those personal stories. I just wanted to personally thank you because I know it's no easy task to come and do this, and my heart goes out to all the families. I know we all have members of our families or friends that have experienced similar situations, and it's not an easy feat. It is an extremely heartbreaking event that occurs in our lives sometimes, but as all government members as a whole, even when we debated the MOMS Act, we do know that road safety is a non-partisan issue, and I believe that all members have the best in their heart to ensure that all Ontarians are safe. And we do the absolute best we can as elected officials to ensure that all Ontarians are safe. I just wanted to put that on the record and just reflect my feelings on that.

Moving forward, going back to the conversation of bike lanes, I wanted to ask a few questions to Jeff Leiper from the city of Ottawa.

Councillor, I just had a couple of questions. I know Ottawa has a lot of beautiful trails and bike lanes. I believe you were giving me a number earlier during your presentation on the—I think it was kilometres. I believe you said 900. Is that correct?

1610

Mr. Jeff Leiper: Correct, sir.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: So, out of the 900 kilometres of bike trail, I know there's a lot of beautiful escarpment views around Parliament and so much—I've actually been around that entire area, and I enjoyed that myself. But out of all of this, do you have an idea of how many of these bike lanes would be on major roadways or major arteries? Would you have a kilometre estimate?

Mr. Jeff Leiper: Fully segregated cycle tracks and things that adhere to the most recent standards, I'm going to suggest that there are probably no more than about 20 kilometres of those through the city. They're coming together quickly. They're being knit together fairly quickly, but unfortunately, we do rely, right now, on a lot of the multi-use paths that have been built by the National Capital Commission, which unfortunately don't take you from point A to point B in any kind of efficient fashion if you are seeking to get to the pharmacy, the library, the hardware store, the drugstore etc. Those trails are wonderful for recreation riding, but they're not great for getting you to where you need to go.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I totally understand that. I just wanted to get myself into perspective of how much is recreational and how much is being used mostly for day-to-day commuting and travelling.

So when we take a look at these 20 kilometres—I know we haven't mentioned what we're looking to do with Ottawa yet; we've only talked about Toronto and some of the work that we're looking at doing on University, Bloor

and Yonge. Are you concerned for any particular roadways, any high-traffic areas that the province might be looking at? Have you received anything from the province or the ministry that they're looking at anything in Ottawa yet or is it—

Mr. Jeff Leiper: Yes. What we've heard from the province thus far is that they haven't identified any infrastructure that needs to be taken out, and that's good news for Ottawa. It has taken us a long time to get the network that we have. It is coming together as a knit network, and it would be a shame to lose any of those—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'm so sorry. I was going to share my time with MPP Bresee after. That's why I'm moving through quickly.

I just wanted to ask, in my closing, when we take a look at those particular bicycle routes, the ministry's going to look at if there are extremely busy routes, of relocating them onto side streets. What's your opinion on that?

Mr. Jeff Leiper: I think putting it on the side streets fails to recognize how people are cycling around and the utility that they get in cycling. I tried to figure out a route that gets me from getting a pint of milk to going to the library, to going to pick up my prescription, to going to the hardware store, and the big Ss that you have to make around the neighbourhood, which we would never ask somebody in a car to do, which are nice, straight, direct routes between the destinations that people want to go to.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you.

For the purpose of time, I'm going to pass it over to MPP Bresee.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Bresee, you have three minutes and 15 seconds.

Mr. Ric Bresee: First off, I want to again express my appreciation, especially for those, I'll say, specifically from the Friends and Family for Safe Streets. I understand your loss, Mr. Pape. The loss of a daughter, as you identified—I also lost a daughter and it's something you never recover from, certainly.

Vanessa, you mentioned, I believe it was, your friend, and Ms. Spieker, your injuries yourself—again, all of these are incredibly difficult things to come forward and speak about, and I greatly appreciate your attendance here today. My sympathies, and my congratulations in many ways for doing so very well after such horrific injury, but my sympathies on the losses.

Ms. Spieker, earlier in your presentation you were mentioning the numbers. You were mentioning just how many people are injured, how many people are killed. You mentioned both specifically bike-related injuries, but you also mentioned just how many people are injured and killed on our roads across the province, and it's a horrific number. The bottom line is one is a horrific number.

We, in this province, have a tremendous safety record. We have some of the best roadways in North America. We keep on being reported as having some of the safest roadways in North America, but it is a journey. We will always strive to make things better. We have done a number of things with this and beyond this bill to continue that path, to ensure that we have that level of safety and

keep on improving our safety with our commercial vehicle inspections, with the training.

All of these things add up to—we are a government who is actively pursuing safer, better roadways. With that, as was mentioned as well, we're pursuing transit options—\$28 billion in expanding transit options and continuing down that path, so that people have those options to take whatever mode of transportation they need.

We will continue to pursue safety and to pursue efficiency within all of our transportation networks.

It wouldn't be appropriate for me to leave my question time without mentioning a couple of the other things that are actually in this bill. I'm not sure that the people who are presenting today—possibly the councillor—would have a comment on this, but part of this bill is about managing the easements around the broadband expansion. I'm actually from a very rural riding. There are many people in my area who don't have access—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Oh. I was hoping to get to a question, but I didn't realize I was running out of time that quickly.

Thank you all for being here.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for your presentations.

CITIZENS FOR SAFE CYCLING
(BIKE OTTAWA)
ONTARIO TRAFFIC COUNCIL
CYCLE WATERLOO REGION

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The next group I'm going to call up is Citizens for Safe Cycling (Bike Ottawa), Ontario Traffic Council and Cycle Waterloo Region.

I will start with the Citizens for Safe Cycling (Bike Ottawa) group. Please state your name before you begin.

Ms. Florence Lehmann: Good afternoon. My name is Florence Lehmann. I'm the president of Bike Ottawa, an association that advocates for safe cycling and an equitable approach to transportation.

Let me start with some videos of traffic in Ottawa.

This is the Queensway, with 10 lanes of car traffic. That was taken on a weekday at 6:30 p.m.

Another example of traffic in Ottawa is the Vanier Parkway at Beechwood. These are five lanes of car traffic. That was taken on a weekday at 3:30 p.m.

The last video is of King Edward at St. Andrew, with seven lanes of car traffic, on a weekday at 5:15 p.m.

As you can see from the videos, we have a lot of cars on our streets where no cycling infrastructure exists, which brings me to my first argument, which is efficiency of travel.

You can clearly see in this image which modes take less space on our streets. Cycling, walking and transit are very efficient modes of transportation—five to 12 times more efficient than driving, in fact. Bikes take no space at all. You can put a lot of people in the space it would take to have an SUV.

Instead of confining cycling infrastructure to secondary roads, this government should prioritize direct routes for safe cycling, and here is why: It takes less effort to have a direct route. It makes people healthier, among other reasons. By having less direct routes, i.e. putting bike lanes on secondary roads, you actually discourage cycling.

1620

Here are some key results of the origin destination survey in Ottawa: Trips were generally shorter and often within the ward boundaries. You can see a lot of trips are actually from zero to five kilometres, and they were often within the same ward, so short trips within your own wards. In the same survey results, the cycling road share doubled: 4% city wide, 7% in the downtown core.

What will happen if you remove safe cycling infrastructure? You force more people into cars and you increase congestion. You increase travel time for drivers making it more dangerous for everyone outside of cars.

Here is an example of close passing. As you can notice, there is no cycling infrastructure here. This was a very close call. I am glad the friend who took this video is okay.

So who are we designing our streets for? We should design them for our most vulnerable people. Our kids should be able to bike safely to school, their local libraries, the local parks. Now, what you see is safe. That being said, parents have taken safety into their hands. There is a growing trend of "bike buses." What are those? Parents riding with their kids to school in a group. Why would they need to do that? Because our streets are too dangerous for our kids. With safe cycling infrastructure, our kids will grow to be more independent.

What are the benefits of separating drivers and people on bikes? Simply put, safe cycling infrastructure saves lives. It saves the lives of people who bike alone. It takes the guessing away from drivers. They don't have to worry about making a mistake that could cost someone's life.

Bill 212 assumes that everyone owns a car. Here is an example of car ownership in Ottawa. Overall, from the Origin Destination Survey, 14% of people don't own a car. That number actually rises to 48%—

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

Ms. Florence Lehmann: The economic arguments: We've heard about how safe cycling is good for business. Montreal has definitely shown that to be true. Cost of commute: Cycling saves people and cities money. Last but not least, Ottawa has made steady strides in building safe cycling infrastructure, and the provincial government has approved Ottawa's official plan. Now it's actually saying that the city won't be able to achieve that.

In conclusion, Bill 212 makes no common sense. It flies in the face of evidence and research, and will achieve the opposite of what this government claims it will do. We'll see more people get killed or severely injured through no fault of their own but because they choose to cycle to get around, and this government will have killed them.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. The time has elapsed for your presentation.

We will now go to the Ontario Traffic Council. Please state your name before you begin. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: Geoff Wilkinson. I'm the executive director with the Ontario Traffic Council.

Good afternoon, Chair, MPPs and speakers. Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy regarding Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024.

The Ontario Traffic Council is a not-for-profit association representing Ontario municipalities, consultants and industry stakeholders, and, collectively, their transportation engineers, planners and road safety professionals. The OTC managed the development, alongside the MTO and municipalities, of the OTM, Ontario Traffic Manual – Book 18 – Cycling Facilities, a bike-lane planning and design guide intended for Ontario municipalities.

We've also produced a protected intersection design guideline and a Vision Zero guide, as well as many other important guidelines for Ontario municipalities, and we deliver annual training to municipal and private sector professionals for all our technical guidelines.

Our members are multi-modal transportation subject-matter experts who draw upon evidence-based research and share information and best practices to develop guidelines, provide expert stakeholder input to the MTO and other public sector entities, and help develop important programs such as automated speed enforcement.

For 74 years, the OTC has served as a resource and collaborated and partnered with the MTO in discussing, researching and developing solutions to transportation issues, challenges and opportunities.

It is with great pride that we can include on this list the expansion of cycling lanes and dedicated cycling facilities right across Ontario. There are countless sources of data and research available to reinforce dedicated cycling lanes as a means to assist in alleviating traffic congestion, protecting the lives of cyclists, benefiting communities economically, attracting development and housing and supporting equity and diversity. Expert transportation planners, engineers and road safety professionals, research and data from Canada, North America and around the world support dedicated bicycle lanes.

The benefits of cycling include public health; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; providing an alternative, affordable mode of transportation for socio-economically challenged individuals; and ultimately, reducing traffic congestion.

The OTC opposes, for numerous reasons, the section of Bill 212 that will require MTO approval where a bike lane removes a traffic lane for an automobile—for numerous reasons. These include road safety. Dedicated cycling facilities protect cyclists from motorists. This legislation will result in unnecessary serious injury and death of cyclists.

I won't take a lot of time to go over research supporting the safety of cyclists through the use of dedicated cycling facilities; however, I will point to three studies that include city of Toronto data. A 2012 study by Teschke and colleagues looks at 690 bicycle crashes in Toronto and

Vancouver and determined cycle tracks were associated with an 89% reduction in injury risk and concluded that cycle tracks are an efficient, effective method of injury prevention for cyclists.

A 2013 article by Harris et al. used the same data but different analytical techniques to understand the association between different roadway infrastructure types and bicycle injuries. They divided the 690 intersection sites into intersection and non-intersection locations. Of the 478 non-intersection injury sites, they compared the risk of experiencing an injury while bicycling on the cycle tracks to streets without any pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure. The researchers found that cycle tracks were associated with a statistically significant 95% decrease in the risk of a bicycling injury. Based on the results of their analysis, the researchers supported the use of facilities separated from motor vehicles as a means of injury prevention for bicyclists.

More recently, a 2020 study by Rebecca Ling, Linda Rothman, Marie Soleil Cloutier, Colin Macarthur and Andrew Howard studied cyclist/motor vehicle collisions before and after implementation of cycle tracks in Toronto and concluded that there were 2.57 times more cyclists on the streets after cycle tracks were installed and a decreased risk of collisions for cyclists, and collision rates decreased in surrounding areas, suggesting additional safety benefits.

The MTO's Ontario Traffic Manual – OTM – Cycling Facilities, published in 2021, provides guidance to Ontario municipalities around planning and designing cycling infrastructure. On page 2 of the manual, it states, "It has become increasingly important to provide high-quality separated facilities with intersection design treatments that appeal to 'all ages and abilities.'"

1630

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

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: "Building a network of low-stress, bike-friendly streets is crucial for municipalities seeking to improve road safety, reduce congestion, improve air quality and public health, provide better and more equitable access to jobs and opportunities and boost local economies and tourism."

Reason number 2 is that there's no data or research to support the proposed removal of, or the restrictions on, the dedicated cycling lanes as reducing traffic congestion.

Reason number 3: It contradicts this government's commitment to reduce red tape.

Reason number 4: It will cost Ontarian taxpayers from across the province tens of millions of dollars, potentially into the hundreds of millions of dollars. According to the city of Toronto's recent report—

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

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson:—this legislation is estimated to cost the city over \$70 million.

The Ontario Traffic Council is calling on Bill 212—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you. I'm afraid we're out of time.

We will go to the third representative, Cycle Waterloo Region. Please just state your name and go ahead.

Ms. Janice Jim: Hi. I'm Janice Jim, vice-president of Cycle Waterloo Region. Thank you to the committee for having Cycle Waterloo Region speak today on Bill 212. It seems that bike lanes in Toronto are the target of the legislation, but I wanted to let the committee know that we will all be affected by this proposal.

CycleWR is a non-profit group that advocates for safe infrastructure for all road users in the region of Waterloo. The region of Waterloo is one of the fastest-growing regions in Ontario. The cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge are vibrant communities with many colleges and universities. K-W is also one of the leading technology and start-up hubs in Canada. Our young and tech-savvy population have wholeheartedly embraced growth and change.

Grand River Transit's ION light rail was completed in 2019. This past June, we celebrated the ION's fifth year of operation. Planning for phase 2 of the ION is already well under way. The region of Waterloo saw record-breaking transit ridership in 2023.

We also have Neuron Mobility in the region, which provides bikes and e-scooters for rental. The use of Neuron bike and scooter share also saw record usage.

So what do these facts have to do with bike lanes? This is evidence that people in the region of Waterloo have embraced transit and active transportation. A large percentage of our student population don't own cars; they rely on transit and active transportation to get around.

The region has carefully planned for future growth by allowing intensification along our transit corridors and lowering parking minimums on new condos and townhouses. The future growth of Waterloo region is dependent on intelligent urban design and planning.

The region of Waterloo strategic plan clearly highlights this. One of the four pillars of the strategic plan is climate-aligned growth, which sees the use of a climate adaptation lens to reimagine infrastructure, land and services for growth. Under this pillar, the region seeks to foster car-alternative options through complete streets and extended alternative transportation networks by expanding equitable public and active transportation networks across the region, making it easier for people to get around and make climate-friendly choices.

The city of Waterloo strategic plan also has a section on infrastructure and transportation systems, which states that Waterloo seeks to "expand and support infrastructure and transportation systems in an environmentally and fiscally sustainable manner that provides residents with resilient public infrastructure and sustainable transportation solutions." The cities of Kitchener, Cambridge and townships in the region of Waterloo all have similar statements in their strategic plans.

Is it the intention of this government to overreach into municipal governance? With this proposed bill, municipalities will now need to wait for provincial approval for bike lanes, which will cause unnecessary backlogs for MTO staff and planners at all levels of government.

The region and cities have carefully planned and consulted with local residents before making these deci-

sions and adapting strategic plans. Local municipalities are the best decision-makers on their own transportation needs.

I would like to finish by sharing some local stories. Cycle Waterloo Region has attended multiple ghost rides this year.

A 66-year-old Kitchener man was hit by a driver riding his bike in February. We installed a ghost bike memorial at the memorial at the site of the accident.

In August, a 16-year-old girl was biking and was hit by a driver, resulting in serious injuries. She had to be airlifted by an Ornge helicopter.

Susan Bard was killed by a driver in a hit-and-run while riding her bike in Guelph. She died in hospital on September 6, 2024, on what would have been her 79th birthday, with her three children by her side. She was an active senior, who served as an usher at Guelph Storm hockey games and volunteered with the Action Read literacy centre, community gardening groups and her church.

The city of Waterloo was ranked one of the best in Canada for connected bike networks. More and more people are getting on bikes and mobility devices every day. The bike bus program, which was mentioned earlier, is where a group of students and parents bike together to get to school, which is growing in Waterloo region.

These are the everyday people who bike and use our roads. Do they not deserve to get home safely to their loved ones?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for your presentations.

We'll now go to the official opposition for the first round. MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, everybody, for presenting this afternoon.

Mr. Wilkinson, you didn't get to finish your thought. Do you want to begin the time by finishing your thought, or did you not have much left?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: Sure. Thank you very much for that opportunity. My very last closing was that the Ontario Traffic Council is calling on Bill 212, for bike lanes that require removal of a traffic lane, to be amended to remove this section in whole.

Bicycle lanes are an important means of transportation, contributing to numerous community benefits, including a reduction in traffic congestion. The Ontario Traffic Council further calls on the MTO to work with stakeholders such as the Ontario Traffic Council, to evaluate traffic congestion as a significant issue and challenge, and collectively evaluate the data and research-based solutions.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you.

I just want to try to set the context before I ask some questions, Chair. All day, I've heard deputation after deputation ask this committee to consider the evidence behind this bill, and I have yet to hear a single shred of credible evidence for this bill. I've actually yet to hear a single delegation in support of this bill. I've seen the city of Toronto. I've seen folks from your profession, Mr. Wilkinson. I've seen Good Roads, AMO, local active transportation advocates. They all are saying the same

thing. The evidence draws the conclusion that we need to give choice to people about how we get around our communities. Deciding to retroactively rip out things based upon sentiment—I think that's the only way I can potentially frame it, given what I've heard all day—doesn't seem to make a lot of sense.

I am wondering, Florence—thank you. Mille mercis pour être ici avec nous. I want you to reiterate, because I know you to be not just a citizen of Ottawa; you have eyes on Europe and you have eyes on other places. You mentioned you've been to Montreal. What we should be doing to encourage choice and actively reduce congestion? If the government were to amend this bill so it actually did reduce gridlock, based upon what you've seen in our city and in other places around the world, what would it do?

Ms. Florence Lehmann: I'll reiterate what you just said: We need to give people choices. I have been to the Netherlands. I've been to Belgium. I've seen different ways of organizing transportation or transportation planning. The Netherlands is absolutely heaven for cycling, but it's also known as a great place for cars, because things are segregated. I remember in the vicinity of Amsterdam, outside in the rural areas, where you would bike on rural roads that are actually for residents only, seeing a sign that said no cycling there because it was a major road for cars. That was totally separating the two, where people who need to drive are going to their places fast, and you feel safe cycling. Montreal does a good job at segregating modes of transportation.

Like somebody said, you take very little space for your bike. Put two people on bikes on the road and people will not notice them; put two cars and they'll say, "Aha, this road is getting used." That's it.

1640

Another thing I saw in Belgium, in Ghent, in the summer was a circulation plan where through traffic doesn't exist anymore. It was wonderful cycling there. I felt safe right off the bat. Why? Because traffic evaporated and you saw so many people with kids, cargo bikes, you name it, cycling—it was so nice to watch and experience.

So if you want to evaporate traffic, if you want to relieve congestion, provide people choices. Cycling is one of them; transit is another.

Mr. Joel Harden: Right, absolutely. Thank you very much.

How much time do I have left, Chair?

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Mr. Wilkinson, I'm worried this bill is politicizing the infrastructure development process. I'm aware that in our city, as folks have already said today, we pay taxes provincially and municipally in order to ensure that we have responsible officials making evidence-based decisions. Those are your members. Do they have a message about concern around politicization of this process? Should this be a partisan issue, or should it be based on evidence?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: This definitely should be based on evidence, so it's a great comment, a great question,

because I think when we look at this bill, one of the biggest things that I know I bring to the table—and I've heard from others as well—is around road safety. I think that is really important when we're talking about cyclists and protecting them. We look at municipalities across Ontario and who the experts are in delivering infrastructure and various types of modes of infrastructure, design and engineering. Those are our engineers, our planners and that stems from our city councils. Our city councils start. They also are the ear of constituents; they work with city staff, in terms of doing what's right within the environment that makes sense for each municipality—

Mr. Joel Harden: Sensitive to context.

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: Exactly.

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

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A minute and 15 seconds.

Mr. Joel Harden: Ms. Jim, over to you. Thank you for joining us to get a Waterloo-Kitchener perspective here on the table, because unfortunately, the member for Kitchener Centre has been forbidden to speak because of the speed-up the government has insisted upon for this bill, which is a real travesty.

I'm wondering if you could talk about what you've seen in Kitchener-Waterloo, of some of the dangers of lack of road safety and some of the opportunities if this government changed this bill so it could be better for your community.

Ms. Janice Jim: The dangers are around the university areas. We have two-tiered infrastructure, so some of the roads are regional governance and also some of the highway crossings are governed by the MTO. The region and the city are a little bit powerless to change the cycling paths approaching the highway interchanges and those are a lot of the places where the accidents happen. One of the interchanges actually got nominated as one of the worst in the world. If you look at the videos and photos, it is infamous for the worst and the most dangerous.

Our local population demands it; like I said, all the younger population—the students and the newer residents that live in townhouses and condos—they don't have cars. They plan on using our ION, our bikes, active transportation or our rideshare to get around, and these people—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sorry, that's the end of your time for the moment. Thank you.

MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you all for coming in or joining us on Zoom.

First of all, we have someone from Ottawa, we have someone from Waterloo and—Geoff, where are you from?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: I live just north of Kingston, Ontario, but my members are in municipalities right across Ontario.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Just a quick question to all three of you: Since you don't live in Toronto, you live in other areas, do you want your hard-earned tax dollars spent on ripping out bike lanes in downtown

Toronto, to the tune of at least \$48 million? Is that how you want your money spent, Geoff?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: I'll probably answer that by saying, if the research and data supported it, then I would say yes, so show me the evidence that it's a good decision and then that would be supported, in terms of taxpayer dollars. That would be my corporate perspective, not my individual answer to the question, but definitely—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Right. But you have yet to see that evidence, right?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: Right.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Janice?

Ms. Janice Jam: I totally agree with that answer. I'm also a frequent visitor to Toronto, and I love the bike lanes. I love biking in the city.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Florence?

Ms. Florence Lehmann: I definitely do not, because I have been subjected to road rage on residential roads in Ottawa—like no through traffic. I've been called a “fucking retard” by drivers. I will choose safe cycling infrastructure any chance I get. If my tax dollars mean that I'm paying taxes so that my life is more dangerous and less safe, because we're ripping out bike lanes, then that's a definite no.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

It just baffles me that this government prides itself on being all about rural areas and not Toronto-centric, yet there's such an obsession, for some reason, with Toronto. I don't know how to explain that.

Now I would like to question Geoff. You're with the Ontario Traffic Council. That sounds like a very interesting group.

You were listing the different stats and facts that you had about the cycle tracks reducing cycling collisions. Can you just go through that a little bit? I think it was very meaningful and important, and it was just kind of quick.

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: Sure. I can provide data to this committee afterwards, as well. I think that's really helpful, because I think the three points of data that I provided were mere tiny bits of research and data that are available.

So pointing on these three studies, cycle tracks were associated with an 89% reduction in injury risk. They concluded that cycle tracks are an effective method of injury prevention for cyclists.

The other data supported that cycle tracks were associated with a statistically significant 95% decrease in the risk of a bicycling injury.

Based on their results—that was Harris et al.—the researchers supported the use of facilities separated from motor vehicles as a means of injury prevention for bicyclists.

It's interesting; the other data goes on to determine that 2.57 times more cyclists were on the street after cycle tracks were installed.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 20 seconds.

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: There was also a decreased risk of collisions for cyclists, and collision rates decreased in surrounding areas, which was also interesting to hear.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I think you talked about a network and a connectivity. These guys just think they can rip out little portions of it here and there, and then it's still going to work, but it's not, because we need the connectivity to keep everyone safe.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now go to the government side, but I will just remind the witnesses that we will not tolerate the use of profanity. So I'd just be careful in your remarks next time.

Government side: MPP Sandhu.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to thank all three presenters. We appreciate your presentations.

I would like to direct my question to the Ontario Traffic Council. The GTA is a transportation hub. We have seen that our province's population is rapidly growing, and we need to ensure that our transportation network can keep up.

Every day, we hear stories from people in my community that it takes so long to get to where they need to go, whether it is driving to work or to visit family. Gridlock is impacting our quality of life.

This government is leaving no stone unturned when it comes to investing in infrastructure—\$190 billion over the next 10 years. We're investing billions of dollars in transit—LRTs; two-way, all-day GO. There are critical projects like Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass.

We need to keep our goods moving. We need to keep our people moving. That is why it is very, very critical to build Highway 413. We hear stories from people in my riding every day about how important it is for the people in my community and across the GTA.

So I just want to understand your thoughts on Highway 413. Do you think that it will help reduce traffic congestion?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: The Ontario Traffic Council also believes in effective, efficient and safe roads. So working together to accomplish those goals is really important to us. I would say yes. Working with the province on developing new means of transportation, including those you've mentioned—the focus on transit, as an example, has been wonderful to see, including right up to the north and having that connectivity by transportation up north. I think it is important to talk about areas other than just the GTHA.

1650

And we're on the same page with regard to moving Ontarians, again, effectively, efficiently but safely. I look at things like HOV lanes, as an example, and bus lanes, and how well they work and how we're moving people to different modes of transportation. I don't think we're asking for those HOV lanes to be ripped out. I don't think we're asking for the bus lanes to be ripped out. Because from a research and data perspective, they make sense. So we'd like to continue to work with you and the MTO on research and data, and effective solutions to the challenge around traffic congestion in Ontario.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: It's good to know. It is no secret, the Liberals and NDP, their stance on Highway 413. That is why they have three seats less than the last

election, because, clearly, the people of Brampton know their stance on Highway 413.

I will pivot to bike lanes. Do you think it is a wise idea to put bike lanes on busy streets in the city?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: I think there's a challenge in doing that, in that you're trying to move the way people behave. People will continue to cycle where they cycle, and what we're going to be doing is we're going to be reducing the safety of those individuals that are cycling and will continue to cycle on our major roadways.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you, Chair.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Good afternoon. Thanks to each of our presenters this afternoon for your time coming forward to share your perspectives.

I wanted to just share something from my community. I'm the representative from Burlington, Ontario. Back in 2016, we had a pilot on an arterial road, where we reduced the road from two lanes in each direction to one lane in each direction, with a centre turning lane to allow for bike lanes. About a year later, city council decided to reverse their decision, return the roads back to four lanes, two lanes in each direction, and put an end to what became known as the "road diet."

Our city is actually doing some other interesting work in terms of encouraging bicycle use and have been looking at off-road bicycle lanes, so either that's in utility corridors, utilizing paths through hydro corridors, and also looking at paving over boulevards. In the suburb where I'm from, we have the sidewalk, then we have quite a wide boulevard. So what we've started to do as an alternate to removing lanes of traffic is paving over the boulevards and making those into bicycle paths, designated bike routes. We have a place for pedestrians, we have a place for cyclists, and we have a place for cars. One thing about that is it actually helps in the wintertime with snow removal as well. It helps keep everyone a little bit safer.

I'm curious—perhaps I'll start with you, Geoff, because I know that you mentioned that you represent a number of different areas across the province—your thoughts on those solutions, and if you think that any of those could be adopted in some of the areas that you work with.

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: That's a great point and a great question, because I think it's true. Every municipality is different, right across Ontario, and I think each cyclist is also different, so we have to keep that in mind. We've got recreational cyclists, we've got cyclists that are coming to work, we've got cyclists that are delivering our groceries and our food, and they're different. Where I live, I don't have anyone delivering food to where I am, but at the same time, I don't have paved shoulders. It would be nice to have paved shoulders. So multi-use pathways are very important for different types of recreational cyclists, as an example.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 60 seconds remaining.

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: I think what you talked about in terms of removing lanes is a great example. We've heard

about those types of things across Ontario, where there are evidence-based decisions that are made.

Chances are, the council looked at the data that was available, the research that was there, and decided that that decision that was made earlier, based on data, no longer made sense.

So I think if we continue to look at data in solving our problems, that's how we can look at alternatives to things like congestion.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: One other thing that I'm hearing from a lot of stakeholders, including from consultants, from city councillors, from residents in my community is around how these bicycle corridors help to improve connectivity. My area is part of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry. We're out of time.

Over to the official opposition: MPP French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It has been interesting to hear, from government members, good examples of when evidence has been involved in municipal decisions, because here we are with a bill that is going to take away their opportunity, as municipalities, to make evidence-based decisions without Big Brother—in this case, MTO—approvals required.

This is not an evidence-based bill. It has been frustrating, I think, for a number of the presenters to come to this committee with so much data and clear evidence on their side and probably—I can't say how they're feeling, but from where I'm sitting, it's quite frustrating to know that that is not information being factored into this bill.

When we saw the Minister of Transportation talking about initially being willing to do some consultations, but the Premier said, "It's not going to happen; we're going ahead"—I think that tells us what we need to know, which is quite disappointing.

Florence, thank you very much for your thoughtful presentation, with the visuals and the videos to show how important active transportation infrastructure is. It's a good reminder.

Mr. Wilkinson, you were talking about traffic—it's in your name: the Ontario Traffic Council. This provincial legislation will require cities to demonstrate that bike lanes that remove car lanes won't have an adverse impact on vehicle traffic. We know that bike lanes are sometimes installed as traffic calming measures, with the specific goal of increasing safety by reducing vehicle volumes and speeds—so to have, I'll say, adverse impact on vehicle traffic as their goal to keep people safe. This bill would create red tape for traffic calming measures and, I think, be quite dangerous in the process. This government is only considering vehicle traffic, not bicycle traffic.

How important is it to factor in all persons on the road when looking at traffic—or is it?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: That's an excellent question. I would say it is very important.

Municipalities have transportation master plans, and within those transportation master plans, those would also include active transportation plans. These are plans that

are developed with consultation, with data, with research for each individual municipality across Ontario. These are unique to each of those environments. They're very important in terms of planning ahead and knowing and understanding the different modes of transportation that are involved within that community, but also looking forward to what we want to see as modes of transportation.

For development reasons, as an example, when we have high urban centres that are looking to build around our transit networks and our cycling networks, those are very important with regard to transportation master plans, again, that take into account a community's own footprint.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: We heard from Ms. Jim about Cycle Waterloo Region and that the region is seeking to expand complete streets, and the strategic plan is at the heart of it. They were talking about students. They're wanting to factor in the reality of road users, but now they're going to have to wait for MTO approvals, and we have heard from AMO and from others that this absolutely is a clear example of provincial government overreach into the municipalities.

1700

Mr. Joel Harden: How much time do we have?

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to move, Ms. Jim, to you, actually, because you were one of the people in the advocacy community who circulated a very interesting article to me that I just want to read into the record, because I've been struggling for evidence, Chair, about where this bill comes from.

This is an article published in a newsletter I think many of us read, called the Trillium. It does a deep dive into an organization in Etobicoke called Balance on Bloor. I want to read from the article that reads as follows, and then, Ms. Jim, get your reaction to it, because you were the one who first circulated it to me:

"Balance on Bloor has a well-connected board of directors in Sam Pappas, Simon Nyilassy, Ron Sedran and the petition starter, MacRae.

"Nyilassy was a Progressive Conservative candidate in 2011. He's a long-time real estate executive and the founder and CEO of Marigold and Associates Inc., a real estate investment firm. Someone with Nyilassy's name has donated a total of \$18,827 to the PC Party since 2014, including a \$1,500 donation last month."

I find it curious, having worked here for six years, how often friends of the Premier seem to be having a big role, whether it be the greenbelt fiasco, ripping up the Beer Store contract early or the 413.

Ms. Jim, do you have the same concerns, given the revelations in the Trillium that we may be having the latest favour done for a friend or friends of the Premier, at the expense of people trying to get around our communities safely?

Ms. Janice Jim: Definitely. The examples you gave are great. Just like the science centre and the Therme Ontario Place, we as citizens question those deals. Like, who is the Premier working for?

You know, it's clear in the region of Waterloo what our citizens want. We want safe infrastructure. We want a safe way to get around.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A point of order: MPP Singh Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Can we just bring it back to the scope of the bill, please?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: She's literally talking about safe infrastructure still. It's not a point of order.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a point of hurt feelings.

Ms. Janice Jim: Yes.

Our advisory councils, our citizens, are really active in advocating at our councils and our meetings. I'm the chair of the active transportation committee, and just from talking to people, it's clear we want bike lanes. We want safe infrastructure. We want a good way to get around. A lot of us don't have cars. We don't want to own a car. So having the Ontario government dictate what we want—is this reducing red tape? What is the aim of this government here?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I think we can pass it on.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay.

MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I think we all value doctors in this room. We've heard from some deputants earlier about their horrific collisions. Thankfully, some of them survived, but unfortunately, others did not.

I'm not sure if you have seen the letter from 122 ER doctors and the letters from the CEOs of hospitals on University Avenue supporting the implementation of the bike lanes—safe, physically separated bike lanes—on University Avenue. The CEO of Mount Sinai and the CEO of SickKids Hospital also included the added fact that Mount Sinai did a survey with their staff and found out 63% cycle to work and 80% support more protected bike lanes.

I'm just wondering your thoughts on that. Does that mean anything to you? Should we heed their advice? Is it a credible source or not? Geoff?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: Well, they're definitely the right people to talk to in terms of research and data. So from that perspective, definitely, the answer would be yes.

I also think that we need to look at this bill—and really, everything that we do from a transportation perspective—through a road safety lens. The Ontario Traffic Council developed a guideline for municipalities around Vision Zero, and that is eliminating serious injuries and deaths on our road. And what we'd like to see is all of our transportation projects, designs, work that we do from a transportation perspective looked at first and foremost from a road safety perspective.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. Janice?

Ms. Janice Jim: I think there's a lot of evidence on University Avenue. There's been tons of videos that have been taken since this bill was introduced that show the traffic flowing smoothly, no problems, because look how

wide University Avenue is. And it's one of the best bike lanes in the city. They just finished rebuilding it. To rip it up now is ridiculous, especially since Mary-Margaret mentioned that more than 50% of one hospital's staff use it to get to work. So what are you going to ask these people to do? How are they supposed to get to work? Are they all going to drive? What's going to happen to traffic when they do that?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And Florence?

Ms. Florence Lehmann: Funnily enough, at our AGM recently, we had Dr. Melanie Bechard from CHEO. She's an emergency doctor, and she's a very big proponent of safe-cycling infrastructure. She mentioned that she's seen during her shifts up to three kids in a row come into these hospitals after being hit by cars, so—

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Great. Thank you.

Sorry, I just have one other question for Geoff from my colleague here, who doesn't have a voice today, but she usually has a very strong voice, so I will repeat her question: Why are we building the 413 over the 407, which is underutilized, from your expertise opinion?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: I can't answer that question from my expertise opinion. I'd love to have a conversation afterwards about different highways and moving Ontarians across different highways and how we do that and where we prioritize. So I welcome that opportunity to talk about moving people again efficiently, effectively and safely.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you feel the 407—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you. Time's up. Over to the government side. MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, everyone, for your deputations this afternoon and joining virtually and in person as well. I know the committee appreciates it.

My question is to Geoff with the Ontario Traffic Council. We've discussed a lot today about municipalities making decisions around their infrastructure and around cycling infrastructure in particular. I would respectfully disagree that municipalities always know best on their cycling infrastructure. In the region of Waterloo, for example, they're planning to, more or less, rip up recent bike lanes to put in different bike lanes. These bike lanes are recently, again, painted and paved, and they are now planning to spend more money, almost the same amount, to do it over again relatively recently. So I would argue that, in some cases, our municipalities aren't necessarily planning effectively and spending unnecessary—

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I'm saying the region of Waterloo is ripping up lanes they put in. That's what I'm saying.

And so, I would just bring that to the committee. It's in the Waterloo Region Record; that's my source.

But to Geoff: I know we were talking a lot this afternoon about cycling, but obviously the bill deals with many other things. And specifically around highways—I know we're talking about Highway 413, but on the traffic council, I'm sure you have some expertise to share with

the committee around—do you believe it's important that the province look at how we can streamline highway construction in general across the province of Ontario? Because many communities are growing. I represent probably as rural as where you live, north of Kingston. But whether it's GO train transportation or Via transportation or public transportation as well—but also roads are needed—lots of smaller towns are looking at those highway bypasses potentially for the bigger trucks. So do you think the province should look at how we can work with our municipal partners to streamline those processes?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: Another great question—my previous role was the executive director with the Ontario Road Builders' Association, so at that time I was advocating for building infrastructure for roads. So a great question that I'd love to provide my background and history, experience with that with you. I think that's part of our dialogue. I think we need to have these kinds of discussions to share where we have issues, challenges, but also opportunities. I see that as an opportunity, and we really need to focus on that.

1710

I understand sometimes, from a government perspective, we look at things like challenges and we oftentimes don't see the opportunities there when we are discussing or debating certain legislation. I think there is still that opportunity. It's very important for us to have those wholesome conversations around developing our roads system right across Ontario, and not forget some of the areas that are sometimes not represented or thought of, including northern Ontario. I mentioned earlier that we really appreciate the work that the province is doing in terms of developing infrastructure in northern Ontario, where some of the important infrastructure will be required and is required today.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you.

Chair, I defer the remaining time to MPP Bresee.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: One of the things we're talking about here today is safety, how people move around the entire province, and it brings me back to a conversation I had—I mentioned earlier that I was in municipal government for a long time. There was a council debate about a particular safety issue, and the engineer brought forward an idea at the time, and that was, if we could pass something that would guarantee that there would be no deaths on our streets, would we do it? Of course, everyone said—and I know this is going to sound like I'm being flippant, and I'm not; I just wanted to enter this into the conversation—and he said we could guarantee it if we limited all vehicles to a speed of no more than five kilometres per hour, then there would be no fatalities. And he's not wrong.

The idea is, unfortunately, while we strive to achieve Vision Zero, while we strive to achieve safety in as many cases as possible, there is a human element. There is a random element. As long as we're wanting the efficiency of the vehicles that we're using, whether they be bicycles, whether they be cars or transports or transit systems or planes, as long as we're going over five kilometres an

hour, there unfortunately will occasionally be injuries; there will occasionally be accidents. We can minimize those to the best of our ability, but we're never going to eliminate them. It's just not a reality statement.

So what we are actually talking about is finding the best way, finding the best path to safety, recognizing that we still use all of these means of transportation, all of the types of vehicles that I just mentioned, including walking and pedalling and all of it, and finding the best way to go about doing that.

Geoff, there is the Ontario Traffic Manual. It is a series of regulations, a series of guidelines that all municipalities follow, and it is a living document. It has been updated and changed and updated and changed many, many times over the years. This is effectively yet another change. There are other places where the province sets guidelines on municipalities as to how they build their roads and how they structure their infrastructure etc.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 55 seconds left.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Can you agree, at least, that this—whether you agree with the decision or not—is simply another method, another piece of the regulations around safety and around our roads that would fall under that Ontario Traffic Manual?

Mr. Geoff Wilkinson: Thank you for the question. It points to something that I didn't get time to address in my presentation, actually, and that's that the Ontario Traffic Manuals are guidelines. They are not legislation. They're not regulations. These are manuals that are produced to provide best practices to municipalities.

So I would recommend that we work together with regard to guidelines to further discuss congestion and ways of alleviating congestion.

Mr. Ric Bresee: How much time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): None.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much to the presenters. We're now going to move to the last group of presenters, so thank you for appearing and you can move away from the table.

DR. MADELEINE BONSMAS-FISHER

MR. RILEY BROCKINGTON

McLEISH ORLANDO LLP

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm going to call up Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher, Riley Brockington and Melissa from McLeish Orlando LLP.

Everybody, there's a hard stop at 6 o'clock, so you probably won't get a full round of the second questioning in.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Do you want to shorten the committee?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): No. One round is one round. It's time-allocated, so at 6 o'clock—it's all prescribed. So we're going to go ahead.

Madeleine, would you like to start?

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: My name is Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher. I'm a Data Sciences Institute post-doctoral fellow working in civil and industrial engineering at the University of Toronto. I use data to make evidence-based decisions, and I use optimization, machine learning and detailed infrastructure modelling to study transportation in our communities. In past work, my research group has produced studies on the optimal streets in Toronto to build cycling infrastructure and the impact of safe cycling infrastructure on travel mode choice.

Today, I will tell you about analysis we've done on the potential impacts on businesses of Bill 212. More safe cycling infrastructure means more people bike. For every 100 additional job locations a person can access using safe bike infrastructure in Toronto, their likelihood of travelling by bike goes up by 40%. Job locations are not just workplaces, they are attractive destinations that include grocery stores, libraries, schools, health care, shops, restaurants and entertainment. When people bike more, they drive less, freeing up space on the roads for others.

If the cycle tracks on Bloor West, University Avenue and Yonge Street are removed, over 600,000 people in Toronto will have reduced access to destinations by bike with the average affected person losing access to 84,000 job locations. This means lost access to jobs, recreational activities, shopping and health care. It means less biking and more driving. Already in 2019, 70% of people in Toronto rode bikes and 44% of people in Toronto already rode a bike to go to work, school, run errands or visit friends—numbers that have only grown since.

With safe infrastructure, more people ride more often, and we have seen this across Toronto each time safe infrastructure has been built. Already, over one in three Torontonians say they would like to travel more by bike if the streets felt safe and if there was dedicated bike infrastructure. Already in 2016, more households in Toronto owned a bike than owned a car.

Destinations both near and far from these cycle tracks will see a staggering drop in potential customers. Businesses along Bloor West—between Yonge and Resurrection Road, where the cycle track is—will lose on average 56% of their potential customers who can safely bike, an average loss of 88,000 potential customers.

For example, businesses in the Kingsway neighbourhood, such as Kingsway Fish and Chips, will lose 97% of their potential customers who can arrive by bike—64,000 people. Burdock Brewery at Bloor and Dufferin will lose half of their potential bike customers, a loss of 109,000 people. Dentists on Bloor at Bloor and Ossington will lose 42% of their potential bike customers—100,000 people, just as the hair studio at Bloor and Runnymede will lose 65% of their potential bike customers—96,000 people. Businesses along Yonge will lose on average half of their potential customers arriving by bike, an average loss of 138,000 people.

I refer you to the comments that I've submitted in writing as well, which have these numbers as well in that form that you can see more of.

Note that across these corridors, those arriving by bike, walking and transit make up nearly all of the customers. Just 10% to 20% of people arrived by car to Bloor West even before any cycling infrastructure was added, and even businesses far from these areas are impacted. A business at Queen and Sorauren over two kilometres away from Bloor will lose 96% of their potential bike customers—108,000 people.

Patricia's Cake Creations near Dundas West and Prince Edward Drive, 1.5 kilometres north of Bloor, will lose 86% of their potential bike customers—40,000 people.

1720

The research shows that people arriving by bike stop to shop more often and spend more money than people arriving by car, and losing a large fraction of potential customers arriving by bike will have a significant financial impact on businesses. In examining the potential impact of the proposed legislation, we find a dramatic negative impact on businesses. Our findings are in line with the large body of knowledge on the positive business impacts of cycling infrastructure.

Across North America, we have seen again and again that when we build infrastructure for active transportation, we see vacancies go down, businesses make more money and the creation of jobs. As with New York, San Francisco, Portland, Victoria and many other cities, when we build safe cycling infrastructure in Toronto, business spending goes up. In short, Toronto's cycling infrastructure, and these three cycle tracks in particular, are providing essential access for people who live, work and shop in Toronto. I have also submitted these comments with some supporting figures in tables in writing.

While in my submission today, I have focused on the economic benefits of safe infrastructure, I would like to take a moment to remember that without safe infrastructure for walking and biking, people will die. Less than two months ago, my close friend's father, Karl Mann, was killed in Ottawa as he rode home from work; safe infrastructure could have saved his life. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you for your presentation.

We will now move to Riley Brockington, on virtual, I believe.

Mr. Riley Brockington: That is correct. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good afternoon to you and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to make a brave presentation today on the proposed legislation in Bill 212. I regret not being able to be there in person, but again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you virtually.

I'm Riley Brockington, city councillor in central Ottawa, and I'm proud to serve the people of my hometown and the people of River ward, my home ward. I also serve on the executive of AMO. It is a pleasure meeting many of you on the committee across party lines in my service to AMO's members across our great province. I'm here today to clarify I'm on my own representing the people of River ward.

If you let me just take you back for about 30 seconds, I remember my first visits to various national museums in Ottawa as a little child, particularly the Canada Science and Technology Museum, and recall my curiosity when I saw the old-fashioned bicycles—large wheel in the front, small wheel in the back. They were known as “penny-farthings” and they were designed to allow you to travel faster; a larger wheel allowed us to pedal faster. These evolved to a more traditional-looking bicycle where we could increase the speed by the use of the gears.

You may ask, “Why am I mentioning this?” Because over time, we evolve to make things better. In my ward, two of the six neighbourhoods are 80 years old, and there are few sidewalks and little to no bike infrastructure, yet cyclists exist. My main struggle as a councillor is, how do you transition or evolve a neighbourhood, town or city, that was built many decades ago to respond to the demands of its citizens? In this case, modes of transportation that established neighbourhoods never made room for. It is a big challenge.

We need bike infrastructure, not just on leisurely trails or pathways for weekend use, but direct urban routes that prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users. I do believe, overall, the best people to make these decisions are transportation experts and staff in municipal town and city halls, decided upon by elected members of those councils. We know the issues, we host public sessions, we remain accountable to the same local people.

No one likes gridlock—it drives me bonkers—and gridlock is a serious problem. Let me say I do applaud the government for wanting to do better and reduce travel times. People want to get home faster, and goods need to be shipped across our cities. So although I do not support the provision in the legislation calling for the Minister of Transportation to be the ultimate authority on whether a proposed bike lane can reduce an existing travel lane, it is a fair question to ask: What benefits what does this provide? What constraints does this introduce?

The province did successfully introduce legislation to provide mayors with more authority in the decision-making when it comes to budgets and approving zoning applications. So instead of yielding this new authority to the transportation minister, would you consider retaining the authority within municipalities and provide the head of council with veto authority?

I have decided tonight not to list the many benefits of cycling and lower costs associated with operating cycling infrastructure now, as I'm sure you're all well aware and you've heard from many delegates today. I simply wanted to focus on my main messages:

(1) We all want gridlock to be reduced. We know gridlock produces many negative consequences.

(2) We need more investment in active transportation, including sustainable long-term transit funding.

(3) Finally, my simple request: Allow municipalities to make decisions at the municipal level. Respect that decision-making level of government.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for appearing virtually with us.

We'll now go to the last representative. Please state your name before you begin. Thank you.

Ms. Melissa Dowrie: Good evening, everyone. My name is Melissa Dowrie. I work at the critical injury law firm McLeish Orlando, and I'm also the director of Bike Law Canada.

Patrick Brown, who is unable to speak with me today, is a partner at the firm. He founded Bike Law Canada in a response to the increasing cyclist and pedestrian cases he took on, all of which shared in common the glaring flaws within our current systems. Bike Law became a legal resource and an advocacy group that seeks to change our Highway Traffic Act and the design of Ontario roadways in order to provide better protection to all road users, including drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, road workers, those using mobility devices and our first responders.

Additionally, in 2010, Patrick and his colleague Albert Koehl requested a coroner's review of the 129 cycling deaths that occurred between 2006 and 2010, with the purpose of examining the circumstances of these fatalities and to also make various recommendations. Those involved in the review and associated recommendations included the Ministry of Transportation, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario Medical Association, the Toronto Transit Commission, engineers, physicians, the coroners' office and police services in Ontario.

One of the primary recommendations made within the coroner's report was:

"To the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

"A 'complete streets' approach should be adopted to guide the redevelopment of existing communities and the creation of new communities throughout Ontario. Such an approach would require that any (re-)development give consideration to enhancing safety for all road users, and should include" the "creation of cycling networks (incorporating strategies such as connected cycling lanes, separated bike lanes, bike paths and other models appropriate to the community.)"

Traditionally, municipal governments have determined what is needed on municipal roadways to ensure all road users are safe. For the province to undermine recommendations by a city or town designed to protect cyclists exposes the province further when someone is killed. Traffic flow and management are always considered by municipal road authorities based on their specific community needs.

The current legislation appears to contradict not only the coroner's recommendations but potentially those of individual municipalities. Such a contradiction could have grave consequences. Instead of progressing, we seem to be backtracking.

I assume you'll likely tell me that bike lanes can be moved to side streets, in which case I will tell you that Bill 212 does not specify side streets. It instead allows for bike lanes to be blocked from roads which remove any motor vehicle lane. In Toronto, where this bill seems to be

targeted, not using a motor vehicle lane is next to impossible, given the densely populated areas.

It is false to claim this bill will allow bike lanes on side streets, and even if so, installing lanes on side streets cost more money, disrupts community safety and is less safe for cyclists due to driveways and parked vehicles pulling into the roadway. Having worked alongside Patrick in representing the families of individuals killed while riding their bikes, I can categorically say this is not conducive to safety and further endangers the lives of vulnerable road users.

When speaking about families of individuals killed, one of the families we have had the absolute privilege to work with are Karen, George and Rebecca Amaro. They're watching us live currently. Karen, George and Rebecca asked McLeish Orlando if we could include their written submission in our presentation here today. Their daughter and sister, Alex Amaro, was a cyclist killed December 2, 2020, in front of Dufferin Mall.

In 2023, McLeish Orlando and Cycle Toronto partnered with the Amaro family in creating the Alex Amaro Cycling Kindness Award. The Amaro family designed the award to reflect the positive, selfless, compassionate and kind way that their daughter lived her young life, and her enjoyment of biking in the city. They purposefully made this award not about cyclist versus driver rights. I'm honoured to stand here for them today and share their words.

1730

"To Premier Ford, Minister Sarkaria, members of the standing committee and all MPPs:

"Whether you drive four wheels, ride two or are a pedestrian, everyone in a vehicle, on a bike or walking deserves to feel safe as they travel city streets. It's why traffic lights exist, speed limits and road rules exist. It's why sidewalks and crosswalks were created. It's why bike lanes and cycling infrastructure were introduced. Around the world and here in Toronto, these are the basic safeguards in place to ensure that everyone, no matter the mode of transportation, gets home alive.

"Our daughter Alex Amaro did not get home alive on December 2, 2020. She was hit by three cars on Dufferin Street as she was cycling home to her apartment five minutes away. Speed and distracted driving were factors. Tragically, Dufferin Street did not have bike lanes in 2020, and sadly, it still does not.

"Bill 212, Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act is wrong on so many levels. Its most frightening aspect, though, is how hell-bent the PC government is to force cyclists to once again ride unprotected among vehicular traffic so that drivers might save a few minutes in their commute.

"What leadership and what country places that little value on human lives? Cars can be deadly weapons. Stripping away the designated lanes that provide safe passage for cyclists is like removing the safety catch on those weapons. That's what Bill 212 is proposing to do.

"This legislation is a nonsensical, extremely dangerous and divisive pre-election political gambit that prioritizes

time over life. It's insane that the Ford government and any human being would literally weigh in favour of motorists getting to where they're going a few minutes faster while sacrificing the safety of cyclists getting home alive, like our beautiful Alex did not, nor the six Toronto cyclists killed by vehicles this year and the too many others who have died riding streets throughout Ontario. It's illogical, it's inhumane and it's wrong. What's next? Taking away stop signs and traffic lights so that motorists can get to their destinations even faster?"

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 60 seconds.

Ms. Melissa Dowrie: "We have sincerely lost our way as a society when we value the convenience or inconvenience of one group of society versus the safety of others. It shouldn't be one or the other. It should be safety for all, and if that means motorists getting delayed a few minutes when it might mean saving someone's life, then so be it. We would gladly sit here in a car in traffic for the rest of our lives if it meant our daughter Alex would be alive today, celebrating life and fulfilling all the promise she had to give to this world.

"No family should ever have to suffer such devastating, preventable, tragic loss.

"We urge this committee and every member of provincial Parliament to see how wrong this senseless and dangerous legislation is, and to never let it see the light of day.

"Safe streets for all.

"Sincerely

"Karen, George and Rebecca Amaro."

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

We will now go to the first round of questioning. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the presenters today.

Thank you, also, to Karen, George and Rebecca Amaro for your advocacy in an incredibly difficult time.

I've just listened to all the speakers today, and to the best of my knowledge, we have not had a single person come to speak in support of this plan to rip out the Yonge, Bloor and University Avenue bike lanes and ban municipalities from bringing in most new bike lanes—not a single one. And the Conservatives—you get to choose half the speakers, so that must have been a very tough choice for you.

I also want to reiterate that I have never, in my entire six and a half years here, seen more people apply to speak in committee than I have seen for this bill, Bill 212—not even Bill 23. And yet, we only have one day of hearings.

My questions will be focused on Melissa Dowrie. My first question is about the coroner's review that identified 129 cycling deaths between 2006 and 2010. It called for complete streets, which should include cycling networks and bike lanes.

Going back to that coroner's report: What else did the coroner call for to reduce cycling deaths?

Ms. Melissa Dowrie: The coroner called for a one-metre passing law. It called for vulnerable road user laws and it called for reduction of speed limits, among other things that are not coming to mind right now.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to touch on one of the recommended measures that you talked about, which is the vulnerable road users law. Your firm was instrumental in writing the vulnerable road users law that we continue to introduce time and time again. The MPP for Ottawa Centre most recently introduced that bill. I have introduced it myself.

So my question is this: Can you tell us a little bit about the bill, and why your firm decided to introduce it or write it?

Ms. Melissa Dowrie: So we decided to introduce it based on the countless cases we were receiving that just glaringly showed that no justice was being provided to the victims and families of loved ones who are being killed on our streets by careless, distracted, speeding drivers. Penalties were so low that it was almost an insult to these families, so we worked with, I believe the first was Cheri DiNovo's office, to implement vulnerable road user legislation, which provides added penalties to drivers who seriously injure or kill vulnerable road users. Those penalties include licence suspension until you complete all of the requirements of the law, and community service.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to touch base: I remember Patrick Brown and you coming to committee in previous times, and one of the things I remember was you talking about what happens in court when an individual is killed or seriously injured. What happens to the driver? Are they required to come? Are they required to listen to victim impact statements? I still remember it to this day.

Ms. Melissa Dowrie: There's no requirement; that was one of the added penalties under the legislation. There is currently no requirement for the driver to attend court, meaning that the families that do attend and read their own victim impact statements are reading them to an empty chair.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It is very upsetting to hear that.

My second question is to Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher. I was really interested in the evidence that you were providing, showing how businesses can benefit from the installation of bike lanes, because it attracts more customers, including customers who ride a bike. Can you tell us a little bit more about how you collected this evidence and what else you found?

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: What we are measuring is whether people can get from point A to point B using only safe infrastructure—and that includes, I want to mention for the record, many side streets, which in our method are considered safe for biking because of low vehicle volumes and low vehicle speeds. So what we're counting is, "Can people reach destinations using safe infrastructure?" and "How many people are within a bikeable range of all these destinations?"

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Harden, please. There is two and a half minutes.

Mr. Joel Harden: Councillor Brockington, I want to thank you so much for joining us today from Ottawa. Earlier this afternoon, Councillor Leiper was with us and I mentioned the tragic story of Audrey Cameron, the 16-

year-old Nepean High School student who was critically injured crossing Carling Avenue.

I'm wondering, given what you said, with a neighbourhood like Carlington, if you can relate to this committee how challenging it is to make sure that neighbourhoods and wards like River ward can be safe for high school students like Audrey, for seniors trying to cross the street, for persons with disabilities—who we have not talked about enough this afternoon; who take a little bit more time, perhaps, getting around. I was wondering if I could get a little bit more detail from your perspective.

Mr. Riley Brockington: Thank you very much for the question, and thank you for your advocacy in Ottawa as well. As I said, my challenge as a councillor is that I have older neighbourhoods that simply don't have the infrastructure, and a municipality cannot afford to convert or transition an entire neighbourhood at once; it's a process over time.

We are governed by a transportation master plan. When you drill down into neighbourhoods, you look at sort of spine routes, the main connecting streets, to prioritize your limited resources. And what are the routes that vulnerable users use? What are the paths they take to get to school or from a retirement residence to the local convenience store, to Canada Post or to the bus stops?

And so, yes, you would see intersections in major streets transition. They are starting to be upgraded, but again, it all comes down to money and the limited resources that municipalities across Ontario have to do this work.

When there is major infrastructure renewal underneath the road that is prioritized, then we will redesign the road at the same time, but that is why it's sort of a patch process where you might have a couple blocks that have infrastructure because that infrastructure was renewed, then nothing, then infrastructure again. Again, we are putting vulnerable users in very risky situations.

Mr. Joel Harden: Agreed.

Chair, how much time is left?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Joel Harden: Ms. Bonsma-Fisher, I just want to offer my condolences on the loss of Karl.

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And Ms. Dowrie, I just want to say, first of all, thank you for your advocacy as a leader in this field. Thank you to your colleague Patrick. I wish I could say that as you recounted the Amaro family story every member of the government was paying rapt attention, but I saw most of them staring into their phones. I think that's where we are. There's a lack of concern, there's a lack of respect for people who try to get around our communities and not be injured or killed. Thank you for being here all the same.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The time is up.

MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thanks for coming in. Best to last, I guess, we've saved it.

Thank you, especially—well, to all of you but to Melissa for all the work you're doing with Bike Law Canada with Patrick Brown, and especially for the Amaro

family and all the other families you represent. It's courageous of you to be here. Thank you.

All day, we've heard from people—as was mentioned by my colleague down the table, not one person who came today was supportive of this bill. We had AMO, representing municipalities, cities, towns, villages; we had BIAs, representing small business; Good Roads and other groups, representing infrastructure; city of Toronto—still here—expert transportation planning for the economic engine of Canada. All the other organizations—Suzuki, Friends and Families for Safe Streets and Ontario Traffic Council—all these great groups and people coming and sharing their knowledge and expertise from all different angles, from a medical angle to safe roads, safety and whatnot.

Why are we even here? It's a shiny bauble over here, because there's also a big portion of this bill that's about Highway 413, which is—the distraction is the bike lanes. It's very easy to distract. Why aren't we talking health care and education and housing? I don't know. And we're trying to ram this bill through as quickly as we can, so there are other reasons why this is happening. We can talk about it another day.

For everyone here in the room late now, what is your one piece of advice as we debate this, let's say, bogus bill, Bill 212?

We'll go with Melissa.

Ms. Melissa Dowrie: My biggest piece of advice would be to rely on the numbers, rely on the statistics that have been provided in this room today—because we have yet to hear what your numbers and statistics are.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And then on to Madeleine.

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: The research is clear, the evidence is clear that cycling infrastructure benefits business, that it does not cause congestion and that we need to create more transportation options for people.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: You're at U of T, right?

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you have facts and stats for your students there? How many of them are cycling? I'm sure they don't have cars.

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: Yes, so there was a survey of students in the GTHA that found that—I think it was a significant fraction of them that did not even have drivers' licences, so they rely on things like cycling and walking and transit to get to school. Only about 71% of households in Toronto own a car, versus 74% that own a bike, and that was just already from 2016. So quite a long time ago.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Wow, amazing. Thanks.

And Riley—Councillor Brockington.

Mr. Riley Brockington: I would ask everyone to contemplate, how will you maintain the safety of cyclists by removing dedicated cycling lanes, and then now expecting them to be integrated and compete for space

with vehicles travelling at a much higher rate of speed? If public safety is at the top of our list for all elected officials of all levels of government, how is the safety of cyclists being preserved and maintained?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move to the government side. MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I know; you've got to listen to Matt Rae's voice, everyone.

Thank you to all the presenters for your presentations this evening—I know we started this morning—and to your deputations today as well. It's nice to see you again, Councillor Brockington. I know we see each other often at the AMO table.

As well, I just wanted—part of the package—I know we've talked about cycling, I know my Liberal independent member brought up Highway 413 as well. There's a lot in the bill, Bill 212, but also within that, the minister announced a fund to begin consultations for the next construction season around potholes and pothole prevention. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate. Would that be beneficial to the city of Ottawa?

Mr. Riley Brockington: Yes, as long as we qualify. I was under the impression that only small municipalities would benefit. Ottawa, as you know, serves about 82% rural. The rural communities within Ottawa compete for all the priorities within Ottawa, and so if that fund could cover rural areas that are even within a large urban city, that would be great. If Ottawa qualifies, fantastic. But we all know that potholes are a major issue. Any investment from the province, from municipalities, to address potholes would be appreciated.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Councillor. I know you talked about, obviously, bike lanes within your presentation. As you know, the government provincially—and I know the city of Ottawa—is working on reducing travel times, congestion, ensuring people—as you mentioned, I believe, as well, in your presentation—can get home to their families or to hockey or soccer practice or whatever in a timely and quick manner. How would you, in your view, balance the government's objective to tackle gridlock and make life easier for drivers with the concerns that you've raised around removing bike lanes?

Mr. Riley Brockington: I looked at that problem, realizing there are multiple modes that one could travel. That active transportation, where it doesn't already exist, is challenging to get off the ground, whether it's sidewalks, bike infrastructure, multi-use pathways. Our roads and gridlock, as I acknowledged in my presentation, is a real issue. Public transit cannot be forgotten; we are struggling across this province to even address our operating costs related to transit. I do believe there is a role the province can play here going forward.

My concern specifically about the bike lane issue is about safety. We put the municipal government through the ringer, through consultations and working with residents and identifying the key priority roads to have this

infrastructure. That's why I believe it's best left with municipalities to make those types of decisions.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Councillor, I will defer the remaining time to MPP Bresee.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you. How much time do I have?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have four minutes and 15 seconds.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Excellent, I will try not to burn it up like I did last time.

Dr. Bonsma-Fisher, thank you for your presentation. As you were describing how you went through your studies, I was quite intrigued. In lay terms, I'm a bit of a data nerd, if you'll forgive me. I hope I understood it appropriately.

You did a review of that area looking at the people that would have bicycles in that area, and what is the likelihood that they would be attending those local businesses and the percentages around that. Am I relatively accurate?

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: Yes, so we're counting the number of people who live within 30 minutes that can reach destinations using only safe roads. So safe local streets or our protected cycling infrastructure.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Excellent, thank you. You've come to some conclusions there, and towards the end of your comments—actually I believe it was to one of the other questions—you said something to the effect of, it helps business and it doesn't address congestion. What part of your study addressed how congestion was happening along those particular streets? From what I'm hearing, I don't hear how those two pieces interact. I'll say a follow-up to that is, what studies would you recommend to pursue that side of it?

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: In our research, we're focusing solely on potential people who can ride by bike. For the congestion piece, the city of Toronto has done quite extensive research on this, as well as many other parts of the world. The city of Toronto measures before and after travel times, as you know, when they do these projects. For example, I can quote you some numbers. After the Yonge complete street project, car travel times northbound increased by 0.8 minutes, an 11% increase, and car travel times southbound were unchanged. Conversely, the number of people biking increased quite a bit more than that. So there's quite beneficial impacts.

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Mr. Ric Bresee: Very much understood, and I really appreciate—I didn't have that number in my head. Again, one of the questions that I would have to pose—and I don't know that you know the answer; I'm not sure that anyone in this room knows the answer. It is something worth investigating. You mentioned that northbound, it was a delay of 11%?

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: Yes, 11% northbound, unchanged southbound for cars.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Understood.

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: Actually, there was a reduction in travel for the TTC bus on that route.

Mr. Ric Bresee: For that 11% delay, I wonder how many vehicles are doing that, how much extra gas they're

burning and how much CO₂ that's emitting and all of that side of it. I think it's part of the equation that we would really want to, I'll say, have a better and fuller understanding of.

As I'm hearing it, your study—I mean, you're making reference to the city of Toronto study, but your study was specifically one about the economics for bike users. It had nothing to do with the car users in the area or the transit users in the area. It was specifically about the bike users being able to follow those safe routes—is that correct?

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: That's correct. People arriving by bike are equivalent to the number of people arriving by car already before bike lanes on Bloor West. On Bloor, in the Annex and in the Greektown areas, there's only 10% of people who arrived by car. So we're not talking about a small fraction of people that are arriving at these businesses; we're talking about a large group.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Forgive me. I don't know if you had that impression. I wasn't suggesting it was a small fraction of people. I'm just suggesting that there is further data to explore.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: One of the pieces that is a potential to explore as well is the differential across the various seasons. Are those numbers the same in the summertime—they'd likely be higher—in the wintertime, lower etc.? Again, I think these are pieces of more information that we could puzzle out for this.

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: Yes. Thankfully, we do have data on this. We know from Bike Share, for instance, that the number of trips taken in the winter of 2024 was as high as the summer months of 2015.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We're out of time in this round.

Over to the official opposition. MPP French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much. I appreciated your thoughtful presentations. It's always so appreciated to have real information and data evidence, especially when faced with this particular government's legislation. I find that that's often in short supply, so thank you for real numbers.

I wanted to know, though, with some of your numbers, Dr. Bonsma-Fisher, did that factor in the destruction of the bike lanes or construction or whatever we want to call it? You were talking about lost access to jobs and recreational activities and whatnot. Did that factor in what will happen to those neighbourhoods in those areas when the government rips out the bike lanes and they're under destruction or construction, whatever?

Dr. Melanie Bonsma-Fisher: We're not able to consider the traffic impacts of that. In our study, we're looking at that if that route is no longer safe, what kind of access impacts there are, and they were significant.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: We had heard earlier from folks doing thoughtful work in planning that there will be time required for that deconstruction of bike lanes, which I imagine would have a significant negative impact on those businesses and communities, which would be

interesting for the government to consider as they're moving ahead with this.

Ms. Dowrie, I appreciated your taking us back in time to some of the thoughtful work that has been done, that we have built on specifically around the coroner's review of all cycling deaths. I would hope that government legislation were actually factoring in more of those policies and more of those recommendations into policy.

As someone who has introduced legislation or, rather, reintroduced legislation, my Bill 15, the Fairness for Road Users Act, does address the insufficient and shockingly low penalty in the event of death or catastrophic injury if someone violates the Highway Traffic Act.

We have just debated and discussed Bill 197, which is another transportation bill talking about e-bikes and cycling. Unfortunately, the amendments, at that time, to introduce vulnerable road user legislation into that bill, again, were met with—the government refused to incorporate vulnerable road user legislation.

We're heading into the amendments section of this bill, with clause-by-clause. What do you think could be added to this legislation or changed? There are whole sections, perhaps, to remove, but in your estimation, what is something that should be changed with this piece of legislation, as it is, inevitably with this government, moving forward?

Ms. Melissa Dowrie: As you say, it sounds like it's inevitable that this may be moving forward. If that's the case, I think it would be absolutely necessary for the province to include an amendment for a vulnerable road user law within the legislation in order to, firstly, deter bad drivers, and also to provide justice to victims and the families of victims who have been killed and seriously injured on our roadways, because I can only imagine those numbers will be increasing.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thanks to everyone for their presentations.

I'm going to pick up where my colleague from Oshawa just left off.

I was part of the precedent that MPP Bell was talking about earlier. I moved Bill 40, which is a vulnerable road user act that was greatly informed by your firm and other advocates in the sector.

The debate, for most of the day, has been about Toronto and Ottawa and large cities. We have not talked about protecting vulnerable road users in smaller communities.

I want to mention a few instances for the record. On August 29, 2022, a 19-year-old cyclist died after a collision with a vehicle east of Stratford. On June 26, 2024, a pedestrian, a 47-year-old man, was killed on Perth Road, north of Milverton, 30 kilometres north of Stratford. In January 2016, quite some time ago—nonetheless, a pedestrian was killed in Minto: Olivia Sinclair, 18 years old.

So it would seem to me that road safety is not just an urban concern. Culpability for people who drive recklessly is not just an urban concern or a suburban concern; it's a Canadian concern.

You have, in the past, when I've asked for your advice, talked about a positive reinforcement approach to reckless

driving. The government has introduced legislation recently around impaired driving and has proposed a one-year driver's licence suspension in the instance of impaired driving. But I'm wondering if you could help me persuade them—because I've tried, but you're the expert—that reckless driving that causes bodily harm and injury is as important to our safety as impaired driving.

Ms. Melissa Dowrie: I've tried too, Joel, but I'll keep trying.

Yes, it's actually far more than just careless driving that is causing injury and death to vulnerable road users. Obviously, things like distracted driving, speeding and whatnot are factors. But it is, a lot of times, minor infractions, when these people are being injured and killed—turns not in safety, improper lane changes. Those sorts of infractions are just as much causing injury and death to vulnerable road users as careless and reckless driving are.

Mr. Joel Harden: Dr. Bonsma-Fisher, from your research, again, extending beyond the urban—because we are being pitted, in this debate, it would seem, between urban and suburban versus rural. Do you have anything to say about how we create safe communities well beyond the downtown core?

Dr. Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher: In our framework, which is used very widely in transportation research, called level of traffic stress, one of the key inputs there is vehicle speed on roadways. So reducing speed of vehicles is a really important way that we can increase safety.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 50 seconds remaining.

Mr. Joel Harden: The reduction of speed; the fact that folks who have repeated reckless driving incidents could then enter into a remediation process where they undertake volunteering—perhaps as a crossing guard, because we need lots of them. They could actually have licence suspensions that are meaningful, or more than a few hundred dollars of a fine—which is what happened to the person who hurt Ms. Spieker, who spoke earlier this afternoon.

If the government really cares about road safety, it will pull this bill and it will work with us to amend it this week.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much to the final group of presenters.

This concludes our business for today.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Thursday, November 21, 2024.

The committee adjourned at 1800.

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