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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

NORTHERN HIGHWAY 11 AND 17 SAFETY ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES ROUTES 11 ET 17 DU NORD

Mr. Bourgouin moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to northern highway safety / Projet de loi 49, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun concernant la sécurité des routes du Nord.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Highways 11 and 17 are lifelines for northern communities. These highways allow residents to access essential services. Frequently, in our small towns, medical specialists do not have local practices, forcing us to travel these routes to access life-saving care. We rely on these highways to get our children to school safely. Working men and women take these highways to get to work every day. These roads move goods across the country, serving as a major economic corridor, the Trans-Canada Highway system.

But too often, these essential routes—these lifelines—are also the scenes of preventable tragedy. Sadly, northerners see crashes on Highways 11 and 17 frequently, and, unfortunately, too many of them are fatal. Yet we ask the same question time and time again: How many more families need to lose their loved ones before the government takes it seriously?

Drivers are being licensed to operate transport trucks without proper training or qualifications. As transport traffic continues to increase, this issue is more pressing than ever in the north, where our highways are narrow and mostly single-lane each way, with little to no shoulders. There is no margin of error. We've seen inexperienced drivers cross the centre lines, losing control on icy curves, forcing oncoming traffic into the ditch or jackknifing. Why? Because they were never properly trained.

Truck drivers are supposed to receive 103.5 hours of education. Once the curriculum is complete, they are supposed to pass a commercial driving test, but we know that this is not what is really happening. Ontario truck drivers' training and licensing systems have been compromised.

The government has contracted Serco in Canada to operate Ontario DriveTest centres. This means a private company is responsible for certifying examiners and conducting road tests instead of the government. This deregulated private system has opened the door for bribery, fraud and issuance of licences to drivers who have not properly completed their training.

A CBC Marketplace undercover report revealed schools and examiners are accepting bribes and falsifying records, allowing unqualified drivers on our roads. The government refused to comment on this report.

This September, the ministry suspended 185 drivers that obtained their licence improperly, but these suspensions will not fix the system. Hundreds of drivers may still be operating without proper training. Systemic issues and a lack of oversight remain unaddressed, and the circle of fraud will likely continue.

Our roads are dangerous because there is no consistent oversight or enforcement to catch unsafe vehicles or unqualified operators before tragedy strikes. Our inspection and scale stations, the very places meant to ensure truck safety, are chronically understaffed. This enforcement staffing crisis has been brought to the ministry's attention since the government was elected to their first term.

In Thunder Bay, a new trucking inspection station was built, costing \$30 million, but the station has never been properly staffed, making it impossible to conduct any consistent inspections.

We know truck traffic is increasing every year. Despite this increase in vehicles, we are seeing a significant reduction in enforcement staff year after year, as personnel are retiring with few new hires to replace them.

In 2012, the ministry reported that they had an insufficient number of enforcement staff. Again, this crisis in enforcement was brought to the ministry's attention in 2019. The Auditor General reported a 19% reduction in enforcement staffing in just four years. Despite this alarming report, by 2021 the Auditor General found that the ministry had made little to no progress.

Since when have inspections become optional?

The Ontario Trucking Association's June 2025 report found that 46% of inspections found non-compliance. That means nearly half of the trucks inspected were either

unsafe or overweight. Can you imagine, if more trucks were inspected, how high this percentage would be?

Since when are we okay with non-compliant, overweight vehicles sharing the roads and endangering our families and communities every day?

The winter season is upon us, which means drivers will be challenged by Mother Nature's unpredictable and treacherous winter conditions such as snow, ice and decreased visibility with high winds. These issues in licensing, testing and enforcement become amplified by the winter conditions. What was once a directly managed public service has been replaced by privately administrated contracts sold off to the lowest bidder. This is not about the plow drivers. These drivers operate their equipment; they do their work with what they have. It's the bad companies that win contracts without having enough equipment to staff or fulfill them. The result is a system stretched to the breaking point.

What we are seeing is crews spread far too thin to keep up with heavy snowfalls and icy roads; plows arriving late—because machines are under-resourced—or simply not deployed; and inconsistent salting, leaving stretches of highways dangerously slick, just so that private companies can maximize profit. Left unmaintained, these conditions are dangerous even to the most experienced drivers.

Can you imagine an 18-wheeler weighing 100,000 pounds, operated by an inexperienced driver with, perhaps, an illegal licence, coming at you on a single-lane highway covered in snow due to delayed road maintenance?

I don't think I need to explain the fear people have about our highways. I think we can all understand the risks involved here.

Ce projet de loi est notre réponse à cette crise. C'est un projet de loi qui vise à sauver des vies, un projet de loi qui réduit les risques d'accidents et les fermetures. Ce projet de loi souligne un des enjeux les plus importants des communautés du Nord.

Le projet de loi 49 assure que tous les conducteurs commerciaux soient formés et testés correctement avec des examinateurs certifiés par le ministère des Transports. Cela permet de réduire les accidents liés à l'inexpérience sur nos routes étroites et sinueuses.

Au cours des derniers mois, le ministère a suspendu 185 conducteurs dont la formation était jugée frauduleuse. Ces personnes ne devraient tout simplement pas être sur nos routes. C'est pourquoi le ministère doit exercer une surveillance plus étroite du processus d'examen et de l'application des procédures de délivrance des permis. Ceci va assurer que les camionneurs soient bien formés et capables de circuler en toute sécurité sur nos routes du Nord.

Ce projet de loi assure que les postes de pesée et d'inspection sont dotés d'un personnel suffisant pour assurer la conformité des véhicules lourds. Nous voyons de plus en plus de camions dangereux ou en surcharge sur nos routes.

Aujourd'hui, les postes sont souvent affectés par un manque de personnel, ce qui permet à des camionneurs dangereux ou en surcharge de circuler librement sur nos

routes. Avec un personnel adéquat et des inspections rigoureuses, nous réduirons les risques pour tous les conducteurs et assurons que les entreprises respectent les règles de sécurité.

Le projet de loi 49 formalise la supervision du ministère pour l'entretien hivernal. Actuellement, les contrats pour l'entretien hivernal sont souvent attribués aux plus bas soumissionnaires. Le gouvernement favorise le profit plutôt que la sécurité des personnes. C'est le devoir du gouvernement d'assurer que la compagnie puisse fournir les services adéquats et remplir les obligations de leur contrat.

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Nous voyons trop souvent ces compagnies couper des coins et livrer des services inadéquats, ce qui entraîne des résultats médiocres, dangereux et inconsistants. Cela signifie que nous devons vivre avec des fermetures prolongées ou des réductions de services parce que les entreprises ne peuvent pas accomplir ce pour quoi elles ont été engagées.

La loi prévoit une supervision claire du ministère pour l'entretien hivernal, protégeant les conducteurs lors des conditions extrêmes. Les familles du nord de l'Ontario ne devraient pas vivre dans la peur chaque fois qu'elles prennent la route pour aller à l'hôpital, à l'école ou au travail. Chaque accident, chaque décès, ce n'est pas seulement une statistique; c'est une famille détruite, un vide dans nos petites communautés. Ce projet de loi est né de la voix des familles, des premiers répondants, des travailleurs du transport, des élus municipaux qui disent depuis des années : « Assez, c'est assez. »

Depuis le début de mon travail comme député, j'ai été fier défenseur de la sécurité des routes du Nord. J'ai entendu les familles, les municipalités, les premiers répondants, les camionneurs de chasse-neige et des transports, et j'ai vu de mes propres yeux les dangers sur nos routes 11 et 17. J'ai soulevé les enjeux à Queens Park et j'ai proposé plusieurs projets de loi concernant la sécurité des routes.

Aujourd'hui, avec le projet de loi 49, nous passons à l'étape suivante pour la sécurité des routes du Nord. Il s'agit d'une réponse concrète aux problèmes persistants que nos communautés nordiques rencontrent tous les jours. Alors je demande donc à tous les partis de soutenir le projet de loi pour nos familles, pour nos travailleurs, pour nos communautés du Nord. Il est temps de prendre nos responsabilités et de rendre nos routes plus sécuritaires.

So, I ask all parties to support this bill. For our families, our workers and our northern communities, it is time to take responsibility and make our roads safer.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I'm glad to rise to speak to Bill 49, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to northern highway safety.

Well, for anyone who has driven the lengths of Highways 11 or 17—and I might have a few times—this bill feels long overdue. These are not ordinary highways; they are arteries that connect northern Ontario. They move our

food, our fuel, our people and our goods, and they are getting busier and busier every year. They connect small towns to hospitals, schools, job sites, and for too long, the people who depend on them have been told to simply accept conditions that would never be tolerated elsewhere in the province.

Every winter, Speaker, we hear stories of closures, accidents and lives lost—tragedies that so many northerners have come to see as inevitable, but they shouldn't be. Unsafe roads are not a fact of geography; they are the result of policy choices. When inspection stations sit empty, when enforcement is stretched thin, when maintenance is outsourced and inconsistent, those are choices that have consequences.

What this bill does is start to correct that. It requires inspection stations along Highways 11 and 17 be staffed daily, not sporadically. It strengthens commercial licensing by ensuring that drivers are tested by ministry-certified examiners, people trained and accountable to provincial standards, and it directs the Ministry of Transportation to take direct responsibility for winter maintenance on these corridors north of North Bay.

Speaker, anyone from the north knows what a big deal this is. When the province handed winter maintenance over to private contractors, the results were uneven. Some contractors performed well, but many northerners saw standards decline: slower response times, inconsistent plowing and an overall sense that safety took a back seat to cost efficiency.

Bringing operations back under provincial management is about restoring accountability. When the province is responsible, there's no one else to point fingers at when the roads aren't cleared.

The reality is that these highways aren't just local roads; they are national lifelines. When Highway 17 closes, Canada's cross-country link breaks. Truckers are stranded, families are cut off and local economies grind to a halt. These are not northern problems. They are Ontario problems and national problems.

The changes in this bill also speak to something deeper: respect for the people of northern Ontario. For decades, northerners have been asked for the same level of safety and service that exists elsewhere. They have written letters, held meetings, stood by the roadside in vigil after yet another preventable crash. They have been patient, and they shouldn't have had to be.

I also want to acknowledge the issue of training and testing for commercial drivers. We've all seen the stories about inadequate training programs and unqualified drivers being licensed through loopholes. That puts everyone at risk—truckers themselves and even families that share the road with them. We've heard of tragedies right here on the 400 near Canada's Wonderland just a few years ago.

Requiring ministry-certified examiners is not red tape; it is common sense. It ensures that when someone gets behind the wheel of a transport truck, they are there having earned that responsibility through real, verified skill.

Of course, passing a law is just one step. These commitments will only matter if the government backs them

up with real investment. Staffing inspection stations 12 hours a day means hiring people. Increasing OPP enforcement requires vehicles, officers and infrastructure. Taking back control of winter maintenance means putting plows, mechanics and supervisors back under the provincial umbrella. These are not costs. These are investments in safety, reliability and fairness.

Speaker, for too long, northerners have been told to just drive carefully and hope for the best. This bill recognizes that good luck is not a safety strategy. What we need and what northerners have been asking for is consistency, accountability and respect.

I want to commend those who brought this bill forward for keeping the focus on the north, and I would encourage the government to treat this not as a symbolic gesture but as the beginning of real, measurable change.

Northerners deserve the same confidence when they leave their driveway in January as anyone driving on the 401. They deserve roads that are maintained, enforcement that is visible and consistent, and a government that takes responsibility.

Bill 49 is not radical. It's reasonable, it's practical and it's long, long overdue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 49, the Northern Highway 11 and 17 Safety Act, introduced by the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

I know this member is passionate about road safety, but all of us in this House recognize and support road safety in Ontario. On the surface, this bill sounds like it's about safety, but what this bill actually attempts to do is impose rigid, prescriptive rules that would make highway operations in northern Ontario less flexible, less efficient and less effective.

Speaker, since 2018, our government has made record-breaking investments in roads, highways and bridges all across Ontario, including right across the north. We've upgraded lighting, resurfaced highways, added guardrails and strengthened our infrastructure, all to make northern travel safer and more reliable for the families, the workers and the commercial drivers.

I recognize that the member opposite supports safety, but this bill would have significant operational impacts on the ministry. It would force staff to sit in inspection stations all day long instead of being out on the roads where they're actually needed.

Let's be clear, Speaker: MTO enforcement officers don't just sit behind desks. They conduct patrols, roadside inspections, speed enforcement and joint operations with the OPP. They often respond to emergencies, investigate collisions and help to keep traffic flowing. To be clear, tying them down with arbitrary staffing rules would take them off the roads, create enforcement gaps and slow down response times, actually making northern highways less safe, not more.

That's the difference between the opposition's approach and ours. They want to manage by legislation. We manage by results, and our government is delivering results.

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Just this year, we've hired 92 new enforcement officers, many now deployed on Highways 11 and 17, boosting the on-the-ground coverage where it's needed most. We've introduced entry-level training for commercial truck drivers, electronic logbooks and tougher inspection protocols, ensuring that Ontario's trucking industry meets the highest safety standards in the country. All commercial testing is already performed by MTO-certified examiners. That's not something new; that's already happening today. Ontario's driver testing standards are the gold standard in Canada, and we're going even further by strengthening identification and licensing requirements through some upcoming legislation.

Our government is holding the bad actors accountable. When carriers or drivers break the rules, there are real penalties and real consequences because safety is simply not optional in Ontario. Speaker, the members can bring forward as many of these—I'll call them symbolic—bills as they like. But the reality is, this government is getting it done.

Take winter maintenance for example. Under our government, we've raised the bar for snow-clearing standards on the Trans-Canada Highway. Crews now clear the roads four hours faster after a winter storm—the highest standard in the country. Our operations run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until bare pavement is restored. We're actually exceeding our own targets. The provincial bare-pavement standard is 90%, but under our government, we're currently hitting 97%, a direct result—

Interjections.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you—a direct result of investment, efficiency and accountability. We are also investing over \$100 million every year in winter maintenance, with more than 1,400 pieces of equipment on the ready to keep our highways clear. Speaker, that's what real commitment to safety looks like.

This government believes in modern, flexible and responsive management, not just more bureaucracy. The NDP's approach would add red tape, reduce responsiveness and, ultimately, make our northern highways less safe. Our approach focuses on outcomes, not optics; on getting results, not on getting headlines. So while I appreciate the intent behind Bill 49, the Ministry of Transportation's recommendation is clear: We recommend voting it down.

Our government will continue to invest, to enforce and to build, delivering safer highways for the north and for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. It's always an honour to be able to get up and rise in this place. But today, it's important that I support Bill 49, Northern Highway 11 and 17 Safety Act, 2025, a private members' bill from my northern colleagues from Mushkegowuk—James Bay, Timiskaming—Cochrane and Thunder Bay—Superior North that they have brought forward.

I'm sure all of us from northern Ontario can agree that road safety, and highway safety in particular, is on the top of the concerns of many residents in northern Ontario. There are multiple Facebook groups with thousands of followers that monitor road conditions and provide travellers with safety updates throughout the winter.

For example, during this this year's provincial election in February, which was called in the middle of winter—a time when road safety in northern Ontario is at its most dangerous—many community members brought up the issue of road safety to me. I'm glad to see my colleagues bringing solutions to the table because this danger is very real for us. Drivers in the north are twice as likely to die in a car crash as drivers anywhere else in Ontario.

Today, we are talking about one of Ontario's most deadly highways in the winter: Highways 11/17. These highways are essential in the north. Anyone who has spent time driving on Highways 11 and 17 knows how common it is to see trucks involved in collisions or rolled over on the side of the highway.

I remember driving on the highway one time, and I saw ambulances and police. I saw somebody doing compressions, and I just drove by it. I remember that road being closed for 12 hours just behind me.

Extreme weather, inexperienced driving and insufficient inspection enforcement are all contributing to making highways even more dangerous. I support my colleagues' calls to mandate 12-hour-a-day staffing at inspection and scaling sites. The government has a role to ensure that the OPP is sufficiently staffed to do this. It is also important that the people responsible for driving these vehicles are approved by certified examiners to ensure that they are adequately trained.

Finally, the Ministry of Transportation should be directly responsible for maintaining highways in the winter. Issues like delaying plowing, inconsistent salting and aging equipment can have life-or-death consequences. It's up to the government to ensure that the highways in the north are safe to drive on.

Speaker, too many families have lost a loved one in a tragic accident due to road conditions. Being from the north should not increase the likelihood that you will die on the road just trying to travel to work or to an appointment. Northern drivers deserve safe and clean highways. It's time for the government to take action to save lives. That's why I'm supporting this bill. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: When it comes to road safety, I know that every single member in this House cares deeply about this issue. Many of us may very well know people who have died in an accident on Ontario's highways. I have a friend of mine and co-worker who died on provincial Highway 3. It was such a difficult stretch of highway that this government pledged to expand it to four lanes, which is actually happening. It's a lifeline for our economy.

I know Highways 11 and 17 as well as lifelines for the north. Highway 401, in my neck of the woods, is also a

lifeline for Canada's economy. A closure there, which we had with a significant fatal accident in 1999—it claimed eight lives and caused almost 100 injuries. The road had to be resurfaced due to the extent of the difficulties. So I know full well the impact that a highway closure will have and know specifically how challenging it can be to manage.

Bill 49 does take a meaningful step forward towards bringing forward awareness and looking for solutions, which I give full credit to. But Ontario is already leading the way when it comes to safety. The measures that were introduced in the bill will have significant operational challenges for the men and women in transportation enforcement, because what we need for our professionals to do is to do their jobs and do them to the best judgment that they can bring. Taking away flexibility for our officers to do what they do best does not give the best results.

Our officers do a wide range of duties, both in station and in vehicle enforcement, from operating inspection stations, conducting vehicle patrols, roadside inspections, speed enforcement and working with the OPP. They do it today. I have certainly seen, down in my neck of the woods, a lot of MTO enforcement, together with OPP, on the road. The flexibility that that affords allows officers to focus on problematic areas or issues that may arise.

They also respond to emergencies, investigate accidents, provide essential support for infrastructure projects and ensure that our highway network operates safely and smoothly. The NDP bill would effectively result in less officers patrolling roads and highways: I know that's probably not the intent, but that is the result when you obligate a specific spot to be monitored instead of the network as a whole. The reduction would create gaps in enforcement and delayed response time and could compromise the safety of commercial and passenger traffic in northern Ontario.

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Our government continues to hire more officers and deploy them to problematic areas, including Highways 11 and 17. Since January of this year, we've hired 92 new officers. These additional officers strengthen our ability to monitor, enforce and respond to safety issues, ensuring that drivers can travel with confidence and that highways remain safe for all. To ensure that we have enough officers across Ontario, since 2018, we have increased the total officer count by 78%. There has been a significant increase since 2018.

We're also ensuring that inspection stations have the resources that they need. For example, X-ray technology has been brought to the inspection stations in Thunder Bay and Gananoque.

And we're not just building inspection stations; we're building an entire transportation network. Since 2018, we've made historic investments to build new roads, highways and bridges across the province. These investments are improving road safety in the north, with more to come. These investments include upgrades to highway lighting, guardrails and road surface improvements, all

aimed at reducing accidents and supporting safer travel for residents and commercial traffic.

And to improve trucking safety, which is at the heart of the inspection stations, we've introduced electronic log monitoring and new entry-level training for new truck drivers, ensuring that Ontario's commercial fleet meets the highest possible standards. We've also strengthened inspection protocols and compliance measures to ensure that all commercial operators adhere to Ontario's high safety standards, because Ontario's training standards are the highest in Canada, and all licensing and testing is MTO-certified. This ensures that drivers on Ontario's roads, including our commercial operators, meet rigorous competency and safety requirements before receiving their licence.

But to make our requirements even stronger, we will be introducing legislation with new requirements to obtain drivers' licences and other forms of identification in Ontario. This includes the introduction of Bill 60, whereby drivers can only obtain a commercial driver's licence after having a full G licence for one full calendar year. Our government continues to hold bad actors responsible and accountable. We are committed to enforcing compliance across all sectors of transportation, ensuring that those who break the rules face swift and meaningful consequences.

We are also taking steps to improve highway operations and maintenance. Increased snow-clearing standards on the Trans-Canada Highway, with crews clearing the road four hours faster after a winter storm, is the highest standard in Canada. Operations are active 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during and following a winter storm, until bare pavement is restored. Our teams work tirelessly to minimize delays, maintain access to critical routes and protect the movement of goods and people across Ontario during the harshest winter conditions. The MTO bare pavement standard is 90% of the time averaged across the province, but under our government, that standard has been exceeded; 97% was our score.

We also invest over \$100 million each year to ensure highways are safe, with over 1,400 pieces of winter maintenance equipment ready to be deployed to keep our highways clear. We will continue to invest in highway safety, hire more enforcement officers and continuously improve maintenance standards.

In closing, I certainly feel for everyone who has been a victim of a crash. The closure—my friend's name was Mike Abaldo, and he died on Highway 3. He worked in road operations, coincidentally enough, and it was devastating to see his loss. I don't want to see that for anybody; I know his mother continues to weep for him. We'll continue to work hard to ensure safety on our roads continues to get better and better.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Highway safety is by far the biggest issue in my riding of Thunder Bay–Superior North. Highways 11 and 17 and the Ontario sections of the Trans-Canada Highway are our main streets, and we share

them with roughly 2,000 transport trucks that pass through every day.

When there's an accident involving a transport truck—and they are frequent—the highways are closed. People miss their medical appointments. Kids can't get home from school. People may be stuck in their vehicles for hours. And when this is in the middle of winter, the risks to people's lives are magnified.

The bill asks for three things: the return of the testing and licensing of commercial drivers to the Ministry of Transportation, the return of winter road maintenance to the MTO and the staffing of all inspection stations for at least 12 hours a day.

Regarding the training of commercial truck drivers, I want to be clear. There are companies offering excellent training, but there are also too many companies getting away with not training their drivers and then playing the system to get their drivers licensed. We know of trucks with red tape and green tape on the brake and gas pedals to help their drivers remember which is which. This is a worker health and safety issue, as well as a public safety issue. But the lives of new drivers are actually being treated as disposable. They deserve to be trained so that they have the skills to drive safely. If we return testing and licensing back to the Ministry of Transportation, we can make sure that when drivers are given a licence, they have the full range of skills required, including the skill and experience to manage heavy loads on our winter highways.

On winter road maintenance: Under the current privatized system, you can drive on one cleared section of highway and then hit another section that has not been cleared. This is not the fault of the snowplow drivers, but of a system built to cut costs wherever possible. Tragically, snowplow drivers have lost their lives while clearing snow because they were hit by a transport truck. These are preventable tragedies.

Finally, I want to talk about the need to staff our inspection stations. Inspection stations pull unsafe transports off the road and ensure that drivers are properly licensed and are not driving under the influence. They are also the front line where traffickers are exposed, including those trafficking people, drugs and stolen vehicles.

Our bill sets out 12 hours a day of staffing, but if we were to get this bill to committee and the government wants 24 hours a day, we're all for it. And I must correct the member from the other side. It is this Minister of Transportation, in two separate public articles, that has said he thinks the inspection stations should be staffed 24/7.

In Shuniah, just outside of Thunder Bay, we have a new \$30-million inspection station that is not even staffed for 24 hours a week. I believe we can get this station fully staffed if the ministry focuses on a regional recruitment strategy. I have ideas about how to do this, and I hope the ministry will reach out so we can have a conversation about how to get this done.

Finally, I want to thank the municipalities from across the entire region, from every northern riding, that have

written to us in support, that participated in our town halls. Advocates from Caledon, Truckers for Safer Highways, women's professional trucking association all support this bill.

In closing, this is a non-partisan bill that will save lives. I hope you will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'd like to thank my colleagues from northern Ontario for introducing this bill today. This really should be a non-partisan issue throughout the entire Legislature.

Since arriving here earlier this year, I have heard, time and time again, from my colleagues in northern Ontario about the issue of road safety; about how scary it is to drive on these roads; the winter driving conditions and the tragic deaths that have occurred, that should not be occurring, any time you leave home to go out to work or come back; or if you're a transport driver, for example, on these roads as well. I've heard about the accidents. I've heard about the delays. I've heard about all of that, but time and time again, we're not seeing the kind of change that's needed.

Earlier this year at AMO, I had the opportunity to meet with the northwestern Ontario mayors' association, and their passion and long-standing requests of the province are to deliver on true road safety in northern Ontario.

My colleague from Toronto—St. Paul's outlined some important reasons why I think she and I are going to be supporting this bill. Improving way stations and driver training, it's a smart move in the absence of additional government investment into these highways.

I'm going to say, I'm a bit concerned right now after listening to response from the government side. It does not sound like they are going to be taking the steps necessary to improve road safety in northern Ontario. I'm very concerned about that. I don't want to be here three years from now and have to hear the same types of concerns and lack of action taking place. The government talks a really good game sometimes, but it needs to be delivered with action. This is a really good opportunity today to be non-partisan, for all parties in this Legislature to come together and support road safety in northern Ontario. This bill is about fairness and safety for northern Ontario drivers. Highways 11 and 17 are main routes for transport trucks and travellers heading east and west, yet they remain two-lane highways in many cases, with few safe passing options. It's time for change.

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What I think the provincial government should be doing is adopting the 2+1 highway model used successfully in Sweden, in Finland, in Australia, adding alternating passing lanes and a median barrier. It would reduce fatal collisions by up to 76% and delivers the safety of a fully twinned highway at a fraction of the cost in areas where it makes sense to do so, when it doesn't make sense to maybe have two lanes in each direction.

These roads are vital trade links as well. Over 900,000 truck shipments travel this route each year, connecting western Canada to the Toronto-Montreal corridor and

supporting northern industries in mining, forestry, manufacturing, agriculture from western Canada coming in and so many other aspects.

Modernizing Highways 11 and 17 will mean safer travel, stronger supply chains and fair treatment for northern communities. It's a practical and affordable solution that puts safety first. That's what this bill is trying to do today. It strengthens our Trans-Canada Highway for generations to come, until the province builds the 2+1 highway model or twins it in both directions.

People in northern Ontario should be able to arrive safely home every night, just like anywhere else in the province. I was recently in northwestern Ontario, and I spent a very small amount of time on these highways. I saw it for myself how scary these highways are, with transport trucks speeding by, going very fast in both directions. I don't think I've ever seen something like that before in my life. And my colleagues in northern Ontario, it's something that they have to deal with and see every single day—their families, their communities. As a province, as a Legislature, frankly, I think we've got to do better.

The way stations: Staffing those way stations to ensure trucks are safe, well maintained and drivers are compliant with rest and weight rules I think is very important. Safety must come first.

Modernizing these highways will ensure safety, will ensure economic opportunity and regional equity for northern communities, reliable east-west connections throughout Ontario and all of Canada. It will help strengthen our internal trade. We hear a lot about the need for interprovincial trade and to strengthen that. Well, updating these highways and making them safe will do that and reduce reliance on US routes.

This bill today, it's a reasonable approach, following long-standing calls from northern Ontario municipalities, residents, members in this chamber. It's about fairness, it's about safety and it's also about economic opportunity for northern Ontario as well.

It's time to invest in these highways to ensure they're modern, safe and key for the communities that they serve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House, and, sadly, we've been having to stand in the House for years and years on northern highway safety.

It's also an honour to co-sponsor this bill with the members from Mushkegowuk–James Bay and Thunder Bay–Superior North.

In 2016, when the Liberal government was in power, I stood in the House and made this statistic: If your car is registered in the district of Temiskaming and it's involved in an accident on a provincial highway, it's four times as likely to be fatal than if your car is registered anywhere else. I can no longer verify that statistic. Do you know why? Because the government of the day stopped publishing the information. That was the response of the Liberal government.

The Liberal government are actually the people who privatized the management of highway safety, but it didn't get any better with the current government. Motor vehicle accidents on my section of Highway 11: There was a 63% increase in 2025 compared to 2024—not getting a lot better.

Road closures, Highway 11, North Bay to Cochrane: In 2020, there were 107. I'm glad you remember the one from 1999, but in 2020, we had 107 closures of the Trans-Canada Highway—all traffic stopped, in 2020. So far, in 2025, we've had 213.

Safest highways in North America, my—I'm not going to withdraw, so I'm not going to say it.

We're so tired of it. So we consulted and we came up with a Northern Highway Strategy. These are the first three things in the Northern Highway Strategy—things that could be done immediately and would make a difference.

The 2+1: a great idea, but it will take years to do that. In the election campaign, the Premier came to Timiskaming–Cochrane and promised to bring a 2+1 from New Liskeard to Cochrane—a big promise. He was going to extend it. The only problem with that promise is that they actually never built the pilot project, so there was nothing to extend. Maybe if the Premier had driven on the road, he would have known that. We are sick and tired of promises.

We don't understand why a Conservative government that is supposed to be all about business—and all those ads on the Ring of Fire. You're never going to get there even on the highways we have now. So how about we start small, do what we can do now to make it safer, and then work together to make it better for everybody?

I'm so sorry to hear that, once again, we're being given lip service. "Safest highways in North America"—the reason I won this election in my riding is, I played the Minister of Transportation over and over and over on Facebook saying that we had the safest highways in North America. It's a joke.

Please—please—at least bring this bill to committee so we can talk about this issue further.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate?

I return to the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay, who has two minutes to reply.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je veux remercier tous les députés qui ont parlé : les députés de Timiskaming, Thunder Bay–Superior North, Kiiwetinoong, Ajax, Toronto–St. Paul's, Hastings–Lennox and Addington, et Windsor–Tecumseh. Je veux remercier le maire, Marc Dupuis, de Mattice-Val Côté, qui est venu parler durant la conférence de France. Je veux remercier les communautés de mon comté : Smooth Rock Falls, Hearst, Kap, Fauquier, Moonbeam, Opasatika et aussi Nipigon, puis j'en saute. Il y a beaucoup d'autres municipalités qui ont supporté mon projet de loi qui viennent du Nord puis qui comprennent les enjeux.

Mais quand j'entends des députés qui ne viennent même pas du nord de l'Ontario, qui ont des quatre « lanes », qui ont des routes divisées, qui ont des « bypass », qui ont tout ça, mais qui viennent nous faire la morale, par exemple,

dans le Nord, que moi j'ai deux routes—moi, je vais échanger avec ta 401. Je vais échanger mes routes, moi. Puis tu viendras bien m'en reparler mais que tu arrives face à face à un 18 roues, qu'il y a deux 18 roues qui s'en viennent, face à toi, puis tu n'as même pas de place à te mettre et que tu es obligé d'aller dans le clos pour sauver ta famille.

Fait que, là, tu viens me faire la morale ce soir sur nos routes, sur comment elles sont sécuritaires, que c'est le « gold standard »? Viens te promener l'hiver sur nos routes; je vais te donner un « reality check », moi. Viens dans le mois de janvier, quand les routes sont gelées; quand il fait moins 30, moins 40; quand on a de la neige et que nos routes ne sont pas bien entretenues; qu'on a des camionneurs qui ne devraient même pas être derrière la roue, qui mettent la vie de nos enfants en danger, qu'on a besoin de dire à nos enfants : « Restez chez vous. Restez aux écoles, ne venez pas pour Noël, puisqu'on a peur que vous ayez un accident, que vous perdiez votre vie. »

C'est la réalité de notre monde dans mon comté et à la grandeur du Nord. Mais on vous entend faire la morale, par exemple, que tout va bien; qu'on a un ministre qui dit que nos routes sont sécuritaires. Les communautés du

Nord ne font que vous dire qu'on a besoin de routes sécuritaires. Amenez-le à un comité pour qu'on puisse l'avancer sans partisanerie.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Bourgouin has moved second reading of Bill 49, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to northern highway safety. Is it the pleasure of the house that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 3, at 10:15 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1850.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Donna Skelly

Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
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Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Cooper, Michelle (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Oakville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Darouze, George (PC)	Carleton	
Denault, Billy (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

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McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	