

Legislative  
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## **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

HE-10

## **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

HE-10

### **Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy**

#### **Estimates**

Ministry of Infrastructure

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

#### **Budget des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Infrastructure

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
44<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Wednesday 5 November 2025

1<sup>re</sup> session  
44<sup>e</sup> législature

Mercredi 5 novembre 2025

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Chair: Hon. Laurie Scott  
Clerk: Tanzima Khan

Présidente : L'hon. Laurie Scott  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND CULTURAL POLICYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DU PATRIMOINE,  
DE L'INFRASTRUCTURE  
ET DE LA CULTURE

Wednesday 5 November 2025

Mercredi 5 novembre 2025

*The committee met at 1500 in committee room 1.*

## ESTIMATES

## MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are meeting to consider the 2025-26 estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure for a total of two hours.

We are joined today by staff from Hansard, broadcast and recording, and legislative research. From the ministry, we are joined by the Honourable Todd McCarthy, Minister of Infrastructure; Deputy Minister Ali Veshkini; and ministry officials and staff. Welcome, everyone.

As this is the first time the ministry is before the committee, I would like to remind everyone that the purpose of estimates consideration is for members to determine if the government is spending money appropriately and effectively in the delivery of the services intended. As Chair, I will allow members to ask a wide range of questions pertaining to the estimates before the committee. In the past, members have asked questions about the delivery of similar programs in previous fiscal years, about the policy framework that supports a ministry approach to a problem or a service delivery, or about the competence of a ministry to spend the money wisely and efficiently. However, the onus is on the member asking the question to make the questioning relevant to the estimates under consideration.

As a reminder, the ministry is required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues that the ministry undertakes to address. I trust that the deputy minister has arranged to have the hearings closely monitored with respect to questions raised, so that the ministry can respond accordingly.

Are there any questions from members before we start? Seeing none, I am now required to call vote 4001, which sets the review process in motion.

We will begin with a statement from the minister for up to 20 minutes. Minister, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Thank you, Chair, and through you: Thank you also to the committee members.

I'm pleased to be here today as the Acting Minister of Infrastructure to speak to estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure. I'm joined by Ali Veshkini, the Deputy Minister of Infrastructure, who is also joined by his executive leader-

ship team: Angela Clayton, president and CEO of Infrastructure Ontario; and Michael Lindsay, president and CEO of Metrolinx, formerly president and CEO of Infrastructure Ontario during some of the time frame being considered by this estimates committee.

Although I was only recently asked to provide oversight of the infrastructure portfolio in early October, I have already come to appreciate the vast array of infrastructure projects that our government is leading and the positive impact that we are having on the quality of life for people across the province of Ontario.

Today I would like to focus on four key areas of our government's infrastructure strategy:

- (1) Our overall capital plan and our committed investment of approximately \$200 billion over 10 years;
- (2) Our focus on building resilient communities for future growth and security for housing and municipal growth;
- (3) Transit-oriented communities, or TOCs, and unlocking housing opportunities and community benefits to enhance the value of this government's transit investments; and
- (4) Finally, our real estate asset management plan, which enhances our properties to support the needs of the organization in a fiscally responsible manner.

Beginning with, if I may, Chair, the capital plan: Our Ontario government is committed to the delivery of an ambitious capital plan valued at more than \$200 billion over 10 years. This generation-defining investment will modernize and expand on key infrastructure projects that impact the daily lives of each and every Ontarian:

—ensuring access to health care is available through the funding of more than 50—that's 50, five-zero—new and upgraded hospitals;

—providing a modern learning environment with 41 new and expanded schools in this fall alone; and

—reducing travel times and tackling gridlock, bringing rapid transit to tens of thousands of commuters in the greater Toronto area with projects such as the Scarborough subway extension.

All of this is coupled with a comprehensive program of new and expanded highways, roads and bridges, and helping to accelerate housing initiatives to address population growth with approximately 800,000 new housing units enabled, all made possible through our programs that address critical water, road and bridge infrastructure—and that is not just one or two municipalities, but in all municipalities across the province.

Our capital plan is also an investment into our economy and an investment in our workers, supporting thousands of skilled-trades jobs. With approximately 440,000 Ontarians employed in the construction sector, our plan is providing job certainty and protecting workers across Ontario.

We are committed to working in partnership with our federal and provincial counterparts to advance initiatives that support a self-reliant Canada that is competitive on the global stage. Our capital plan sets the broad vision, delivering critical infrastructure projects that grow the economy, get people and goods moving, and deliver a better quality of life across our province.

Chair, I next wish to highlight building resilient communities for future growth. Let us talk about our commitment at a community level and our partnerships with municipalities to meet future needs. Our government is working with counties, regions, towns and cities across Ontario to ensure that future generations can achieve the dream of home ownership.

We also need to ensure that our communities have reliable local infrastructure to support rapidly changing population growth, including roads, bridges and critical infrastructure systems. This can be accomplished through a series of targeted programs, and our government has provided the tools and the resources that municipalities need to be future-ready. This includes the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, MHIP. Municipalities report that one of the greatest barriers to getting more housing built is the cost of servicing infrastructure. This includes roadways, erosion infrastructure and water treatment facilities.

In response to these challenges, Ontario launched the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program in 2024. Since the launch, the program has enabled the construction of around 800,000 homes across the province. This past August, Premier Ford announced at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference that we are committed to deepening our partnership with communities by investing an additional \$1.6 billion in the program. This was new top-up money just a few months ago. This extraordinary investment has nearly doubled the funding provided through the program, bringing our total investment to an historic \$4 billion.

The Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program has four distinct funding streams, each one tailored to address a different area of need.

There is a Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, and it helps municipalities develop, repair, rehabilitate and expand critical drinking water, waste water and storm infrastructure. This unlocks more housing opportunities, supports a growing population, protects communities and enhances economic growth.

The housing-enabling core servicing stream assists municipalities with building, maintaining and repairing roads, bridges and culverts, all while unlocking new housing opportunities and ensuring that communities have safe and reliable roadways.

The health and safety water stream is a new stream announced in January 2025. It helps municipalities and First Nations build, expand or rehabilitate aging water, waste water, stormwater, and flood and erosion infrastructure, all

to help preserve the current housing supply and to protect communities during extreme weather events. Applications are currently being evaluated against a rigid selection process, and the ministry aims to announce recipients in the near future.

The last program stream is the agriculture and irrigation stream. This is designed to build more homes, protect farmland and keep workers on the job in Niagara region and the municipality of Leamington. We have invested \$135 million to support water systems and irrigation, announced this past August. We have received positive reactions from the region's tender fruit growers and greenhouse operators.

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Housing-enabling water infrastructure, or HEWI, is another lending stream. This year has also seen the first loans approved under the housing-enabling water infrastructure lending stream under Infrastructure Ontario's loan program. Launched in 2024, the investment of \$1 billion supports the construction, expansion and rehabilitation of drinking water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure projects that also enable new homes.

In August, Infrastructure Ontario approved loans for the first two communities that will benefit under the program, those being the municipality of Centre Hastings and the township of Hornepayne. This flexible financing is helping these smaller municipalities to upgrade their water infrastructure and, together, facilitate 190 new homes in those regions. We look forward to sharing more details in the future about additional municipalities that are approved for this program.

OCIF is the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. In addition to our investments in housing-enabling infrastructure, the ministry is also working closely with communities to address their broader capital needs. The Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund provides funding to small, rural and northern communities, all to renew and rehabilitate core infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, water and waste water infrastructure. These would be included in a municipality's asset management plan.

In September, we announced that for 2026, we will be investing \$400 million to help 423 of these communities with their critical infrastructure. We are also raising the minimum grant for municipalities to \$125,000. That's an increase of \$25,000 over last year. This will ensure that we are addressing needs on a priority basis. Funding allocations are established, of course, through a formula, and this formula accounts for the different needs and the economic conditions of each community.

Since 2018, our government has provided \$2.8 billion through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. This ensures hundreds of small, rural and northern communities have stable and predictable infrastructure funding.

ICIP is the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. In partnership with the federal government, we continue to support communities through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. This represents a total of up to \$30 billion in combined federal, provincial and partner funding, in which Ontario has invested a total of \$10.2 billion across five ICIP funding streams targeting different infrastructure needs.

These different needs include such funding needs as community and recreation, green infrastructure, public transit initiatives in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation, and rural and northern communities.

ICIP funding has now been fully allocated, but along with our provincial and territorial counterparts, we continue to advocate for new infrastructure funding from the federal government to address the needs of communities across Ontario.

Municipal asset management planning is an important feature of my submission today. The ministry supports municipalities in their asset management planning, ensuring dollars are invested where they deliver the greatest community benefit. Working in partnership with the Municipal Finance Officers' Association, tools and supports are available to communities. These include workshops, communities of practice and one-on-one guidance for smaller municipalities.

Municipalities also have the option to use their funding from the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund to cover eligible expenditures for the development, updating and improvement of their asset management plans.

To ensure more municipalities are set up for success, our government invested an additional \$1.2 million through the AMP it Up program, so that even more municipalities have access to expertise and support. This brings the total funding through AMP it Up to more than \$3 million over four years. That started in 2022.

On transit-oriented communities, or TOCs: We believe in continuing to advance this policy, because it is critical to unlocking the value of our transit investments. Our Ontario government is committed to a generation-defining investment in transit expansion, and we want to achieve the most impact possible for each and every dollar spent.

The Transit-Oriented Communities Program will build vibrant, mixed-use communities. These communities will bring more housing, jobs, retail, public amenities and entertainment within a short distance of transit stations.

We are exploring transit-oriented community opportunities along the province's four priority subway projects, as well as GO Transit and light rail transit across the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Transit-oriented communities are an opportunity to marry smart urban planning with comprehensive transit investment. This would be accomplished by:

- increasing transit ridership and reducing traffic congestion;
- increasing housing supply and job opportunities;
- stimulating the economy through major projects; and
- bringing retail and community amenities such as community centres within a short distance of transit stations.

The Transit-Oriented Communities Program has the potential, then, to create approximately 340,000 new residential units, including affordable housing options, and to create space to accommodate about 75,000 new jobs near subways.

Our Ontario government continues to refine and improve the Transit-Oriented Communities Program, so that we can make it faster and easier to travel across the greater

Golden Horseshoe and bring more housing and jobs closer to transit.

I next wish to turn to the real estate asset management strategy for the province of Ontario. This is the fourth item that I want to address. I'd like to highlight the management of the government's real estate portfolio and how we are ensuring our assets meet the needs of our organization in a way that is fiscally responsible and sustainable.

Our focus is delivering consistent, efficient and sustainable realty practices across Ontario. The government's general real estate portfolio is one of the largest public sector realty portfolios in Canada. The portfolio includes courts, schools, laboratories, offices and detention centres, amongst other assets. The general real estate portfolio is managed by Infrastructure Ontario on behalf of the province.

Our government is pursuing a series of asset management priorities to stabilize our real estate portfolio. These priorities include addressing the deferred maintenance backlog and ensuring that provincial buildings are compliant under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

On deferred maintenance, our government has invested \$250 million over three years to help address high-priority deferred maintenance requirements. These funds were distributed between deferred maintenance and current renewal needs. These allocations have improved the condition of provincial real estate assets. More work is needed to remove and prevent further deferred maintenance and to maintain provincial buildings in an adequate condition.

Regarding compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, planned investments of \$4 million in 2022-23 and \$103 million over four years beginning in 2023-24 are expected to eliminate all known accessibility barriers and will be coupled with major repairs undertaken in those assets. Examples of accessibility upgrades include improvements to entrances, stairways, washrooms and elevators. This work is essential to improve the accommodation of employees and visitors to our government buildings and to enhance the delivery of government services to the people of Ontario.

Another example of the government's forward-looking asset management approach is the sale of surplus and under-used government properties. They are being repurposed to support key priorities, including housing, long-term care, transit-oriented communities and other social infrastructure.

Here are a few examples from this past year alone of how we are doing just that. Unneeded government land in Aurora will become a new campus for the francophone community, operated by la Communauté du Trille blanc, with a long-term-care home, housing and recreation space. A former hospital site in Hamilton will host two new long-term-care homes and additional housing. Surplus government land in Owen Sound is being put to use for much-needed affordable housing.

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The sale of surplus government property continues to generate revenue and savings for taxpayers by reducing liabilities and ongoing maintenance costs associated with owning vacant properties. Since 2018, our government has

sold 145 surplus properties, generating more than \$319 million. This has also reduced maintenance and operating costs by \$5.46 million annually.

We continue to work with ministry partners to develop a refreshed strategy to leverage surplus government lands in support of Ontario's social and economic outcomes and to evaluate whether surplus properties outside of the general real estate portfolio can support housing or long-term-care use.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** One minute.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** In concluding my opening remarks, I would like to thank you, Chair, and the entire committee—all members of the committee—for your interest and your kind attention this afternoon. Our more-than-\$200-billion capital plan is a cornerstone of our government strategy to protect Ontario. We look forward to continuing our work to build a more resilient economy with more jobs and more homes, while at the same time improving the quality of life for all Ontarians.

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

We will now begin the question-and-answer segment in rotations of 15 minutes for the official opposition members, 15 minutes for the third party member and 15 minutes for the government members for the remainder of the allotted time. As always, please remember to make your comments through the Chair.

For the deputy minister and assistant deputy ministers and ministry staff: Please state your name and title the first time you speak, so that the proceedings can be accurately recorded in Hansard.

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

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Minister and Deputy Minister. I just wanted to seek some clarification before I begin. When the estimates were tabled in June, it was the Ministry of Infrastructure responsible for the Ontario Place redevelopment, as well as the Ontario Science Centre. I know responsibility has been transferred to the tourism ministry, but we are here to discuss and vote on the ministry estimates as they were tabled. I just want to make sure that there are officials responsible for Ontario Place and the Science Centre present who can answer questions.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Minister, I guess that's a question for you. The mentioned responsibilities are in the estimates printed version, so—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** There are folks who can answer questions about those?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** That's understood. I will take each question as it comes. Certainly, I can answer some questions to a limited extent on Ontario Place, for example. That, in and of itself, would not be out of order. But as we know, for the record, the responsibility has been transferred to tourism—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, thank you. I just wanted clarification. It's appropriate for me to ask about the estimates as tabled?

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Last year, the government shut down the science centre and said that the closure would be cheaper than making repairs, which Infrastructure Ontario had estimated at \$22 to \$40 million. But on page 36 of the ministry's detailed financials, we see that interim spending on the science centre last year was more than \$50 million higher than the previous year, and planned spending for this year is another \$50 million. Historically, government funding for the science centre has been less than \$20 million per year.

My question to the minister is: Why is the government spending more to keep the science centre closed than it claimed it would cost to keep the science centre open?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Through you, Chair, to the member from the official opposition: We are proud to be leading a once-in-a-generation revitalization project at both the Ontario Science Centre and Ontario Place. The plan is, of course, that the new Ontario Science Centre will be relocated to the newly revitalized Ontario Place. Currently, there are two interim locations for the Ontario Science Centre, one of which I visited as Minister of the Environment earlier this year—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Chair?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —but both sites, if I may say, were left in an abysmal condition by the previous government.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Chair? I'm sorry.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Minister Surma worked tirelessly on ensuring that Ontario Place—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Stop.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Minister, it is the member of the opposition's time.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Sure. Okay.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** And I know this story forward, backward and inside out, as does everyone in this room.

My question is: Why is the government, as per the estimates, spending more to keep the science centre closed than it claimed it would cost to keep it open?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** As I've indicated, when it comes to any property, there are maintenance costs to keep the property adequately maintained. That's part of what is at play here with the former site of the Ontario Science Centre.

But to dig deeper, I would ask my deputy to hand it off to whomever he believes could be of assistance in providing more details.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Absolutely. Ali Veshkini, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure.

Some of those costs—\$19 million is what the province provided, but the cost, truly, to run the science centre could range from—and the Auditor General has said—anywhere from, I think, \$32 million to about \$38 million yearly.

In terms of some of the costs that we're looking to also cover moving forward: With respect to one, still maintaining 770 Don Mills, which is a very small portion of that—but also making sure that the exhibits were decommissioned appropriately and stored appropriately as well, as well as the moving costs. So it's really around the moving of the exhibits, making sure we're fortifying the asset as



well and, as well, helping the science centre, which was always in their plan: to keep on ensuring that they're getting out there in the community with any kind of satellite interim locations as well as programming.

With respect to the exhibits and any cost around those exhibits, those costs would have been borne regardless of when the move would have happened anyway, because a lot of those exhibits are old and, as the Auditor General did note, it's over \$100 million that we would have to pay for new exhibits to make sure that they're refreshed and they meet the new STEM learning. And so, really, around that costing, we would have had to bear a lot of those costs anyway in terms of making sure that we're decommissioning the facility and storing those old exhibits and then figuring out what to do with them. So that's, really, around the increased cost.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. The Auditor General says the estimated costs of relocating the science centre are at least \$400 million higher than what was claimed in the government's business case. The decision to relocate was based on claimed savings of \$257 million over 50 years, when in fact the government will save hundreds of millions of dollars by simply repairing the existing science centre.

I'll ask if the minister will admit that it will cost taxpayers more to relocate the science centre than it would to complete the long-neglected repairs.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Well, through you, Chair: First of all, the decision to leave the Don Mills site for the science centre to relocate to two interim locations and ultimately to the newly revitalized Ontario Place was made by the board of the science centre, and it was made, as I understand it, on the advice of engineering professional experts. But I, again, defer to the deputy minister for any further detail.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Yes. In terms of roof repair or anything else with that respect, really it was around the safety and ensuring that there was the safety. A lot of the roof repair, also, we could not get to, and so what we had to do was, regardless, close down the science centre for up to two years to be able to investigate 20% to 30% of the roof assembly that we could not even get to to evaluate the risk. We were not prepared to put anyone in a building where we could not even evaluate the risk and have to shut it down for one to two years.

With respect to cost of new versus repair, one thing that the committee should keep in mind is, regardless of cost and the Auditor General noting the cost to build new, also, the cost to repair has also gone up post-COVID as well. So it has to be an apples-to-apples comparison when looking at that.

Currently we are out to tender as well for the new science centre, and we'll see what that pricing does come in at, vis-à-vis what the Auditor General quoted is a potential cost.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. This isn't the question I was going to ask, but is the new science centre going to be a stand-alone or will it still be built on the parking garage?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Stand-alone.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Stand-alone—so that will include a foundation and possibly a basement.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** A foundation, yes, possibly.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. You're all looking at me. My understanding was it was going to be built on top of a parking garage and therefore it wouldn't need a foundation. So that will be an additional cost than what people were anticipating. Is that a fair assessment?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** No, there was always a foundation—and also understanding that under that foundation, you do have to have things like shipping and receiving, right? Things of that nature and also allowing operational vehicles to come in and out—you wouldn't want those operational vehicles or the shipping base to be in the front of a brand new building. So, there was always going to be one level under. That was anticipated for those operational aspects.

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**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you.

It's been a year and a half since the government issued an RFP for an interim Ontario Science Centre facility. The government said this interim facility would be open no later than January 1, 2026.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Point of order, Chair.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** I have to excuse the member. There's a point of order.

MPP Sandhu?

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Chair, I think this question is outside the scope of estimates. The minister was very generous enough to explain the situation about Ontario Place and the Ontario Science Centre, but if we can focus on—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** It's literally in the estimates.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** I think this is not within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Infrastructure. It has been moved to a different ministry now, so if you can please stay within the scope of the estimates.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Chair, MPP, I've already asked for a decision on this and I got clarification.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** MPP Sandhu, it is in the estimates that are before us.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** And it is in order, which is what I asked at the beginning, before I began.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** The answer is: It is in, so the point of order is not valid at this point.

MPP French, please resume.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you.

But well done throwing me off my track; I'm sure you'll do it again.

The government said that the interim facility would be open no later than January 1, 2026. You have less than two months left. Will this interim facility be open on January 1?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Through you, Chair: I visited an interim facility that is one of the two interim sites for the science centre, so it is already open, as far as I can tell. I did indicate that.

The member suggested January 1, 2026. We're in 2025. Perhaps the deputy can confirm or refute.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Absolutely. Working with the science centre in terms of the strategy of what an interim location looks like, at the time, the decision was made in order to

allow for the science centre to have a more varied and much more expansive reach. There were two locations that were picked. One was Sherway, and that location was picked given its connectivity to a mall and in an urban spot, as well as the Harbourfront Centre, which was really picked given the proximity to the future science centre and the potential catchment of people that would be coming as well to the new science centre.

Really, the decision was to create two interim locations. Those locations could be activated very quickly as well, and the science centre could start testing things like new ticketing systems, getting out to new communities that they haven't been to as well.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Is what we have today—and the minister just said he has visited an interim facility. Is that what we can expect then? Is that all that there is? When I was asking about the RFP for an interim Ontario Science Centre facility, is what we have now—that's it?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Currently, as it states, that we know, yes. Some questions of any future plans can be referred to MTCG ministry, whose estimates will be next week.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. In June, the science centre employees' union was told plans for the temporary science centre had been paused. That's where we are today, where the minister has visited those—like, that's all there is.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Those are the two interim locations; however, there are other pop-ups, as well as other kinds of programming that are being completed right now. But yes, there are two interim locations, currently.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay, thank you. When will the new permanent Ontario Science Centre be open?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I think that definitely is a question that would have to be answered by the Minister of Tourism at estimates next week, because that's a forward-thinking question beyond what we already have, which are two interim sites that are already operational.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I just thought I might, while you were here, see what you knew. Thank you.

The relocated Ontario Science Centre is one of three major procurements under way for the Ontario Place site. Another procurement under way is for the new parking solution, which evidently will be a new surface structure for up to 3,500 vehicles, located across from the Brigantine Cove. How many storeys is that structure going to be?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** The structure will be up to four to five storeys.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Sorry?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** The number is up to four storeys.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I heard 45 storeys.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** No, four to five storeys.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Four to five, okay. We just want to be clear for Hansard.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Yes. What you quoted is an up-to number as well. And as we said in the SCOPA briefing, it's really centred around maximizing the amount of parking space, not just for the site alone, but for the north of Lake Shore as well, and to potentially activate parking for not just Ontario Place but also the surrounding areas.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. The press release from the ministry and the Premier's office stated that the parking garage would cost less than \$400 million and generate up to \$60 million in annual gross revenue. Will the ministry please provide the business cases or studies or whatever is provided the basis for these claims?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Through you, Chair: I would defer to the deputy minister or the Infrastructure Ontario representatives who are present.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Thank you for that. Those are the numbers that went to Treasury Board.

In terms of the business case, I cannot commit to providing that right now, but that is an answer that we can take back and get a response to.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. So the business case or studies or whatever provided the basis—you will take that back and see if it's something that can be shared with the committee?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Thank you.

Since the ministry knows how much revenue will be generated by the parking garage, it must know how much it will cost for someone to park. How much will it cost?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** There's going to be a wide range. If we do want to get into more details, I can ask Angela Clayton to come up. But there's a wide range depending on the time, and depending on the event as well. The government has not determined what the true parking is, but the range of parking price within that area could deviate from \$20 to over \$30, depending on if you go and do a survey of other areas and, really, depending on the type of event as well that is on, on a typical day.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** One minute.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** So, really, there's a wide range of rates, and government has not determined.

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

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The ministry also released a conceptual design for the parking structure with some very pretty design elements. Are these elements actually included in the RFP's required deliverables?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Yes.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I think the short answer is yes—through you, Chair—according to the deputy.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. And I think I'm probably out of time.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Yes.

MPP Watt, you have your round of 15 minutes. You may begin.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Wonderful. I'm going to start with Ontario Place. Your own estimate shows a 160% increase in transfer payments for the Ontario Science Centre and continued Ontario Place redevelopment funding. Plans include the five-storey above-ground parking garage. I believe it was reported in the news that it would cost about \$400 million. What money has been allocated towards this so far and how much has been spent?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I defer on that specific figure, if it's possible to retrieve it, to the deputy minister. But just to be clear—through you, Chair—the ministry, to this point

and to the point that I became acting minister, and even before, worked to ensure that the Ontario Place site servicing was complete, and then it was transferred, in terms of responsibility for it going forward, to Minister Cho at tourism.

But that specific question, to the extent it can be answered, is not a present and forward-thinking question, it seems to me. I'm not sure whether we can answer it at this point.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** The \$400 million has been noted. The spend to date has been very little because we're out to tender right now for that.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you.

Can the minister confirm whether the \$50-million transfer payment for the Ontario Science Centre covers design and planning or whether construction contracts have been issued?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I would defer to the IO personnel through the deputy minister on that.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Sure. Angela?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Good afternoon. I'm Angela Clayton, CEO with Infrastructure Ontario.

Apologies; the question was with regard to the transfer payment made to—

**MPP Tyler Watt:** The \$50-million transfer payment.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** And whether or not that includes—

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Is it for design and planning or does it include construction contracts?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** It does not. The cost of the design and the construction for the redevelopment of the new science centre is contained within the capital budget for that item. It is not part of the transfer payment.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you very much.

I'm going to shift gears here. The broadband and rural infrastructure, something very important—we need to make sure that—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Just before the member asks the question—through you, Chair—broadband is another item of responsibility that has been transferred out of this ministry. I know we can look past tense because we're dealing with estimates over the past year. But just in terms of the question, let's be clear: Broadband is now under the Ministry of Energy and Mines.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** There's a section in the estimates about broadband and rural infrastructure.

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**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** There's no question. Depending on the nature of the question, I may be able to answer it in this estimates, but otherwise, it may be more appropriately directed to the Minister of Energy and Mines.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** MPP Sandhu has a point of order.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** This is another part that is being moved to another ministry, and this is out of scope. So if you can focus the questions related to the Ministry of Infrastructure that falls within the jurisdiction of the minister.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** It's in the estimates, though.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** We're just double-checking. There's a quick section—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I suppose we can wait to see what the question is, exactly; mine was just a cautionary point of order.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Okay. Go ahead, MPP Watt, because there is a piece about broadband in the estimates before us.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I'm looking here and it looks like about four million dollars-ish was not spent from 2024-25, and there doesn't seem to be any money allocated in 2025-26. Why is that?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Through you, Chair: The deputy minister can assist.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Absolutely. The broadband operations, as well as the majority of the financing, has moved. What you're seeing there is the residual that was left within our ministry. Moving forward, we do not have any more money or responsibility around the funding around broadband.

So, really, that's why you see no other money allocated, because that would be reflected on energy's estimates.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Is there a reason that that \$4 million wasn't spent last year?

*Interjection.*

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Sorry, you want me to talk about—never mind. All good; I got you.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** It's your time. You've asked the question, and we'll tell you.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** So the question was, "Is there a reason the money wasn't spent last year?" The answer from the deputy minister is—

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** No, there wouldn't be any specifically, just around project timing, and expenditures around project timing, cash flow and burn rate.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you.

Moving on to government real estate: The real estate operating budget is \$400 million, yet the office optimization subprogram alone increased by 12%. What savings, if any, have been realized from the government's remote work and real estate rationalization plans?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** When we answer questions about the remote and return-to-work policy, which the member has raised, we can talk about the capacity issue when it comes to estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Through you, Chair, I believe the deputy minister can assist with that specific aspect.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Exactly. The real estate strategy that you commented on is really centred around buying new good assets. Right now, in terms of the marketplace, there is an ability to buy assets at a good price. The asset that we did buy off University Avenue—that's why the expenditures have come up—was really an asset that we had rentable space in already. The vast majority of the space, we had space in, and so we were presented with an opportunity to buy that space. So we can relieve the leasing dollars that we would be paying for that asset and then actually own an asset and not be paying rent. That's really where the expenditures were: the buying of that asset.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you.

The Legislative Building restoration allocation dropped 38% to \$4.36 million. Does that reduction mean deferred

repairs to the Legislature or related heritage work here at Queen's Park?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** The deputy minister can assist, through you, Chair.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** No. That's really just around the project dollars for the planning and the consulting dollars as we're looking at the restoration work that is needed on the Legislative Assembly, whether it's heritage, whether it's the project planning or the timelines. Really, it's just around the cash flow that is needed in that year that we estimate, based on the work that we would need for contracts and for internal staff.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Sorry; the \$4.36 million dollars is going toward just consultations and planning?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Not consultations; the consultants that are needed for the heritage work and for the engineering and planning for the restoration.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Is the government considering selling or repurposing any crown properties to offset these rising real estate costs?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Well, we have outlined already, in my opening remarks, our approach to the real estate portfolio management plan. As a general question, I can only repeat and rely upon what I said in my opening remarks. I'm not sure that the question calls for anything more specific than that.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** It's more so just a yes or no.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I would refer the member back to any opening remarks, if I can just retrieve them.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** It's all good. I'll watch it back.

I'm going to move on to housing. The Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund jumped from \$150 million to \$549 million. How will you ensure these funds go to growing communities that need homes and not politically connected municipalities?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** This is the housing-enabling water infrastructure fund, and specifically the lending stream, which we call HEWI. We've seen this year the first loans approved under the housing-enabling water infrastructure lending stream under Infrastructure Ontario's lending program which launched in 2024. There's an investment of \$1 billion which supports construction, expansion and rehabilitation of drinking water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure projects that enable new homes.

Then, in August, Infrastructure Ontario approved loans to the first two communities that will benefit under the program, which I highlighted were Centre Hastings and Hornepayne.

Angela Clayton from Infrastructure Ontario is here and, I think, can speak to exactly the process and framework under which these loan approvals occur.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Certainly. As part of our loans approval process, we assess the municipality and our exposure to municipalities. Throughout our lending program, we've lent to over 386 different municipalities across the province. So we make sure that we're not disproportionately lending to any given municipality relative to their size.

We also do take a look at what their enabling infrastructure needs are and make sure that the loans are going to support water infrastructure as the program intended.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** And I think the deputy can supplement that with some statistics or information on rural and northern communities in the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Absolutely. We have various streams around municipal infrastructure. Stream 1 is around really enabling the water systems; another is around core enabling infrastructure. In aggregate, between those two, around 130 projects have been approved in rural or northern communities, so there has been a good portion of those projects that have moved to communities that are either smaller or in the north.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Thank you.

What metrics or public reporting will your ministry provide to track whether this spending actually leads to new homes being built? This is from the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Well, first of all, we have very many grateful municipalities, and also builders and potential homeowners who are very happy with the investments that we've made in this area. Insofar as what we are looking at achieving, it's enabling, through various programs, hundreds of thousands of new housing units of all shapes and sizes. Whether or not we have a matrix to track with precision how many will come to be in the coming years—I would defer to the deputy minister.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Absolutely. As the minister has said, in the enabling infrastructure for housing—over 700,000 potentially enabled homes. Each municipality that has received that does have to report back to us, as we move forward with the funding and in the future, around how many were enabled.

Again, what we're trying to do with that program is ensure that core water infrastructure is in place so that the housing can come to those. We're not paying for the housing; we're just ensuring that the enabling infrastructure is there and that's not downloaded to anyone else. Hopefully, that will then entice the municipalities and their partners to build that housing. But that is what they reported, and we will continue to be working with municipalities.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I'm glad it's going to be reported, but how are we tracking, per my question, that this spending actually is leading to these homes being built?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Through report-backs from the municipalities to us.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you.

Will your ministry commit to publicly releasing the list of funded projects and their corresponding housing targets?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Through you, Chair: The report-back would be from each municipality, and then we track it centrally to track individual results across 444 municipalities and then the total for the province. In terms of the outcomes, I see no reason why they wouldn't be publicly known.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** If I may, Minister?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Yes.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Within the ministry's public accounts, payments to each municipality are transparent from our ministry and any ministry.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** So you are committing to releasing the list of all funded projects?

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**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** It's a fact more than a commitment. The transparency is there and will be there.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you for that.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** You have two minutes left.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Thank you.

Can the minister confirm how many housing units are expected to be supported by the \$843 million combined under the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund and Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I did give some figures in my opening remarks, but with respect to that particular initiative, the deputy may be able to break it down into a range.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** The aggregate number is around 700,000 homes for the two programs, the HEWSF and the HECSS program that we have.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you.

How long do I have?

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** One minute remaining.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Perfect.

The ministry's total spending is rising to \$3.67 billion, an 11% increase over last year. Where is the majority of this new spending actually going and what outcomes should we expect to see?

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Really, the increase is centred around a few things. Number one, you brought up office optimization and making sure that our assets—buying good assets, and trying to relieve leases and our other assets. That's one area.

The second area is really just around supporting our programs and the natural cash flow of our programs, whether it be transit-oriented communities or, as we talked about, Ontario Place, as well as supporting ongoing operations.

So it's really centred around ensuring that we have the money for our operations to continue to deliver projects, as well as asset funding that we would need to make sure that we are either maintaining or closing off on assets that we're purchasing.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Thank you. That's it for me.

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

We'll go to the government side, MPP Sandhu, I believe you're beginning.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** First and foremost, I would like to thank the minister, deputy minister and the entire team for being here and for your presentation. Minister, I want to thank you and appreciate the additional responsibility you have taken as interior minister. We as committee members sincerely appreciate all the hard work, your leadership and commitment on this file.

My question is regarding the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, Minister. We have seen first-hand that the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program has been making a real and positive impact on Ontario's communities. I have had the opportunity to meet over 60 municipalities at the recent AMO conference, and also had the opportunity to travel to different parts of the province to

celebrate the ground-breaking of the infrastructure projects we announced.

Can you please share with the committee how the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program is making a real impact on the municipalities supporting our long-term new housing and new opportunities in the municipalities?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Well, I thank the member for Brampton West, and the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Infrastructure, as well.

This really is transformative. It's a very important and relevant question to this estimates presentation today. MHIP, or the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, is nothing short of an historic government investment that supports core infrastructure projects that will help enable and maintain housing for growing and developing communities.

Just this past August, Premier Ford announced the increases I already indicated of the top-up of \$1.6 billion—the additional investment, above and beyond the initial investment—the total now being \$4 billion invested in MHIP. This program supports our commitment to billing more homes and stimulating economic growth across Ontario. It underscores our steadfast dedication to address housing challenges and ensuring sustainable community development.

Our ministry has opened intakes for funding streams targeting assets aimed at promoting growth and housing since 2024. This is in addition to protecting communities by addressing aging infrastructure. To put that in context, the four streams I touched upon, the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, the housing-enabling core servicing stream, the health and safety water stream and the agriculture and irrigation stream. All of these, in different ways, help municipalities to build, repair, rehabilitate and expand critical infrastructure, particularly drinking water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure to support new housing.

Some \$1.7 billion alone is being invested through the MHIP HEWSF stream to support 127 water infrastructure projects across Ontario; \$1 billion of this funding is supporting 93 projects to enable the construction of approximately 240,000 new homes in 101 small, rural and northern municipalities without housing targets. And then there's the 700,000 homes that will be enabled, as well, that were touched upon by the deputy.

The housing-enabling core servicing stream is providing municipalities with \$400 million to build, maintain and repair municipal roads, bridges and culverts. It will enable new housing opportunities.

Additionally, the province launched the \$175-million MHIP health and safety water stream to help municipalities and First Nations build, expand or rehabilitate aging water, waste water, stormwater, flood and erosion infrastructure that addresses health and safety risks to those communities. These projects will help preserve, I submit, the current housing supply, and it will protect communities during extreme weather events. All applicants will be notified directly once the assessment process is complete later this year.

In August of this year, we launched the agriculture and irrigation stream under MHIP, investing \$82 million to

improve crop yield, quality and drought resilience by ensuring a consistent water supply. This investment will particularly benefit high-value fruit and vegetable crops like Niagara's peaches and will enhance water quality in areas like Leamington by collecting nutrient-heavy waste water for greenhouse operations.

By investing in agricultural projects in Ontario's economic powerhouse regions—and by the way, 30,000 workers in Ontario are devoted to our agricultural sector that feeds cities and indeed feeds the entire province and beyond. So we're not only supporting local economies and protecting municipal water systems, but we're also laying the foundation for long-term growth and food security. This is how we build a stronger, more self-reliant Ontario and, indeed, protect Ontario.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you, Minister.

How much time do we have, Chair?

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** There's nine and a half minutes. But who is going? You guys decide.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you, Minister, for highlighting all these investments. The overwhelming demand of municipal housing and prospective programs, shows how badly municipalities were underfunded by the previous government.

And since 2018, we have been taking action. We've been stepping up. It shows, the numbers you have shared, that these numbers were not only necessary; it was long overdue.

One thing I can tell you is that when I had the meetings with the municipalities, with the mayors, they genuinely appreciate all the investments this government is making. We've been calling on the federal government for a while now, but we've been taking this step alone, because we heard from the municipalities that water infrastructure is the number one enabler to build housing. So thank you for that.

Can you share a little bit more on the additional \$1.6 billion of funding the Premier has announced, how that will further accelerate the progress?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** This was an addition to the initial investment in the MHIP program of \$2.4 billion. At the AMO conference in Ottawa this year, the Premier and Minister Surma announced the additional top-up funding of \$1.6 billion, bringing it to \$4 billion. We believe in working with municipalities, providing them with the supports, because we're partners; we serve the same citizenry. We all have to tackle the same problem, which is the housing challenge here in Ontario that, quite frankly, we haven't seen since the Toronto Blue Jays were last in the World Series.

But there were 15 years between 2003 and 2018 when the previous government left infrastructure in ruins. We saw the abysmal state that the site of the original Ontario Place was left in. We saw what was left of the old science centre site. So we've had to pick up the shattered pieces of this sorry legacy of neglecting infrastructure investments. We picked that up, and we're moving forward working with municipalities in a positive way.

That is what I mean when I say that we can and must together build the Ontario of tomorrow in every way pos-

sible, providing municipalities with the support and the tools that enable housing, that enable building in a responsible way and in a way—wearing my other hat as Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks—that protects our shared environment and makes sure that the same air that we breathe, the same water that we drink, the same land that we depend upon is kept safe and clean and is available to all. It belongs to all of us. We have to do both; we can do both.

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**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** MPP Saunderson, you have six and a half minutes left, roughly.

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to thank the minister and staff for attending today.

I want to pick up a bit the questions that you've addressed from this side of the House talking with the infrastructure funding. As you've indicated, it was about \$2.4 billion, and we've committed another \$1.6 billion. I know in my riding of Simcoe-Grey and across Simcoe county, we've got a number of successful grant recipients; I think in the neighbourhood of about \$160 million. So thank you very much to the ministry for that.

We also know that we've got 444 municipalities across Ontario. About 75% of the population lives in maybe 15 or less of those municipalities—very focused in the GTA and Ottawa areas. And so now we've got 430 municipalities that are taking care of probably 80% to 85% of Ontario's landmass. As you've indicated in your answers so far, protecting Ontario, making sure that all communities thrive, is essential.

I'm wondering if you could speak, Minister, to the other investments that are being made on the municipal level. Because they are our critical partners in terms of making sure we have housing in the ground, making sure we have employment and making sure that we can connect our communities and serve our residents. I'm wondering if you can speak to the other municipal funding that your ministry has put into the municipal sector outside of the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program and what we're doing to help municipalities keep up with their infrastructure needs to make sure they're equipped for the demands that we're seeing today.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Through you, Chair, it's an excellent question from the member. We greatly appreciate his leadership in, and his advocacy for, his community. Like my community, his has wide rural swaths. I always like to say the riding of Durham, which I am proud to represent, is kind of a microcosm of the province of Ontario, because we have farms and rural hamlets, but we also have, obviously, suburban areas. In Courtice and Bowmanville, it's more urban or suburban, and same with north Oshawa, but then we have Scugog and a part of Uxbridge. These are smaller municipalities that need our support.

We commit, therefore, to making sure that no community, no municipality is left behind. That's why I want to highlight, in answer to the member's question, the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, OCIF. We're providing significant support, therefore, through this funding to smaller communities

across the province. What works for Scugog in my riding may not be what works for Clarington, also in my riding, a much bigger municipality.

We're investing \$400 million in 2026 to renew and rehabilitate critical infrastructure like roads, bridges, water and waste water systems in 423 small, rural and northern communities. The funding will be delivered through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, OCIF, part of our overall \$200-billion capital plan over the next decade to build key public infrastructure, strengthen the economy and support jobs.

For the past seven and a half years, since 2018, we have provided \$2.8 billion through the OCIF program to support these municipalities. And following a review of the OCIF program in 2021, changes were made to how the formula is calculated. This is to ensure funding is targeted to communities with the greatest core infrastructure needs. The ministry implemented a funding cap in 2022 that sets the maximum amount that communities can receive to 2.5% of the annual fund. This change was made to better support small and medium-sized communities needs and ensures that the funding is stable and predictable, while also addressing core infrastructure needs across these municipalities.

Communities may accumulate their annual grant funding for up to five years to address larger infrastructure projects, and then they can report on how and when banked funds will be used. Since 2023, the Ministry of Infrastructure has been using forward-looking data, shifting from historic costs to current replacement values, or CRVs. The ministry implemented a standardized CRV template to streamline the data collection process and to make it easier for municipalities to submit their CRV data.

Additionally, in 2026, the minimum grant amount for municipalities will increase to \$125,000 from \$100,000, and municipalities will see changes of no more than 10% annually from their previous year's grant. This ensures that funding is stable and predictable while allowing the ministry to remain within that \$400-million funding envelope.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** There's one minute and 40 seconds left.

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Thank you for that answer.

You mentioned in your comments the Canada infrastructure program, and I'm wondering if you can explain how that can help to unlock some additional funding for rural and smaller communities across Ontario and maybe give some examples.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Obviously, not only do we in the municipalities serve the same citizenry, but the federal government and this provincial government serve the same citizenry. As the Premier often says, regardless of party, this is above partisanship. There happens to be at the present time a Liberal government in Ottawa while we are the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario. We have to work together.

Infrastructure funding has been announced in yesterday's federal budget, and we welcome that. We'll get more specifics in the coming days and weeks. Obviously, we welcome those investments alongside our investments, because the federal government of Canada, the provincial government

of Ontario and all municipalities within Ontario are responsible to, accountable to and serve the same people.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Twenty-five seconds. You're all done?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Twenty-five seconds? I just want to thank the minister. As I indicated my opening comments, of the seven municipalities that are in my riding, six have received funding that is critical to help us unlock much-needed housing in our area to make sure growth is sustainable, reliable and intentional. Also, with the Honda plant down in the south end of the riding, we've got a lot of work to do there. So thank you for your help.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** We're going to keep going.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Excellent. Thank you very much.

We'll now start our second round with the official opposition. MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Just before the pause, I wanted to confirm that I had asked about the conceptual drawing for the parking structure at Ontario Place, that those interesting design elements have been included in the RFP's required deliverables. I believe I was told yes.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** That's a conceptual drawing. I'll ask Angela Clayton to come and describe the design elements that are in an RFP.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Yes. Because it's quite pretty. I'm wondering if eventually it will just look like any other parking garage or if those interesting design elements are actually included in the required deliverables.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** The RFP for the parking garage that's in market right now is a design-build. That means that the proponents that are responding are going to be responsible for the design.

We specify the capacity, as we've talked about, up to five storeys, and the anticipated number of spots. We also specify design requirements, so we talk about the aesthetic nature and desired outcomes. We wouldn't say specifically it needs to look like the rendering that was produced, but that there are aesthetic aspects of it.

The integration of green space through the utilization of a berm, the profiling of Ontario as part of the signage and making sure that there is aesthetically pleasing panelling on the exterior of the parking garage were all factors as part of the design requirements that are in the RFP.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I appreciate the clarification.

The government published the "final designs" for the public realm improvements contemplated for the east island. The government's web page says these designs may be subject to change.

"Final designs" and "subject to change"—are these final designs or are they not? If I could seek clarification on those two.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Back to the Infrastructure Ontario representative, Ms. Angela Clayton.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you, Angela.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Different from the RFP that's in market right now for parking, we also have an RFP in market for public realm. That is what's referred to as a construction

management agreement. Typically, the design is complete. That design has been completed by our third-party designer. We're then going to retain a firm that is responsible for building that design. Throughout that process, it's not uncommon for challenges with the design or issues to come up. So that gives the province the flexibility to make revisions to this design if there are issues that are identified by the builder once they're retained.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So they may not be final designs, but a revisable kind of thing?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Correct. The design is complete, and once the construction manager is retained, they'll be provided the design. As they get going with their construction drawings and start to tender the packages, issues might come up, and that might prompt the need for changes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** So I should think fine-tuning as opposed to something totally new.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** That would be accurate, yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Were the designers given a target budget to work from?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** Typically, with a CM, a construction management agreement, we would have an estimate for what it would cost to build the design. That is shared with the builders. We also recently released our market update, which includes the estimated range of cost for public realm.

If you just give me one moment, I will reference what that number was that was disclosed. That number that was disclosed was between \$200 million and \$499 million, so that would be the range that would be provided to the bidders. Once the company is retained, then we work with them to develop a more detailed budget based on the design that has been completed.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Can we ask for the terms of reference given to the designers of these final designs with the target capital budgets, required elements or deliverables?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** The RFP documents are typically made public once the procurement has been completed. This is in an active procurement right now. Once the procurement is completed, we will make those documents public, and those documents will include all of the information that was disclosed to the bidders as part of the process.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Thank you.

The Auditor General reported that Ontario Live had been given a sole-source contract to deliver services and amenities on the east island, despite Infrastructure Ontario previously advising the ministry not to have further discussions with them. My question: Last year after IO advised the ministry again about the unsuitability of Ontario Live, the ministry told Ontario Live it would instead proceed with a competitive procurement. Earlier this year, IO launched a procurement for the Ontario Place landscape and public realm construction. Will Ontario Live be eligible to bid on this or any other procurement for services on the east island, given Infrastructure Ontario's repeatedly stated concerns about its suitability and qualifications?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I just want to say, to begin—and then I can defer to the IO representative, Ms. Clayton—

that the IO market update generally addressing all projects was released just this past month. It includes 25 projects in pre- and active procurement and represents a combined design and construction value of more than \$30 billion.

Then, in addition—Chair, through you—there are 20 projects listed in the market update in the planning stages for which scope, timing and delivery model are still being determined. These projects bolster the government's more than \$200 billion capital plan that's been referenced already. We are quite confident in our ability to deliver large infrastructure projects on time, and the IO market update was released publicly to assist the public and all members of provincial Parliament to be more familiar with where we're at. Anything more specific than that—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. To your point with what is in active procurement and what not, I am being forward-looking with this question because, as we've talked about, the public realm construction—will Ontario Live be eligible to bid on this or other procurement for services on the east island?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** The RQ, the request for qualifications for the public realm, was released in June and then closed in August of this year. The RFP is expected to be released early next year. Ontario Live was not one of the shortlisted firms for public realm, but there currently is no restriction in place that would prevent them from bidding on any of the Ontario Place packages. As part of our standard process through the request for qualifications, we would continue to assess any submission that they make in terms of whether or not they're qualified to deliver the services that they're bidding on.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Thank you.  
Time?

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Seven minutes and 40 seconds.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Minister, you raised the prospect of having new hospitals, and I know that there isn't a community in this province that isn't excited to have access to the health care that they need and deserve.

Focused on the Ottawa Hospital, Infrastructure Ontario is in the process of finalizing the contract for the new Ottawa Hospital Civic Campus redevelopment project. This project is being procured using what is called a progressive P3 model. This is the same model that was recently flagged by the Auditor General. She noted that for the Ottawa Hospital, as well as the new Mississauga Hospital, Infrastructure Ontario changed the delivery method to this progressive P3 model in the hope of getting more competitive bids, but in both cases, Infrastructure Ontario still only got a single bid.

The cost of building the new Mississauga Hospital is more than \$14 billion. I feel like that is a lot of money. Is that a lot of money? Is that what it costs to build a hospital these days?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** The commitment that our government has made is a transformational one in terms of the dollar investment and the fact that, I believe, the number is 50 new or upgraded hospitals. The member, I think, references one of those and I can defer to Infrastructure Ontario's representative for that in particular.



**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I think two were mentioned, the Mississauga one and the Ottawa one, in the question.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The specific question I have—but also, it's a bit more of a conversational question too: \$14 billion seems like a lot of money for a hospital, and if we're planning to build as many as we are, in whole or upgraded parts, and we only have two bidders that go back and forth and can only handle one at a time, if it takes us 50 years or whatever, the costs are going to continue to grow and we're already at \$14 billion. So my question is: Is \$14 billion a lot? Is that what it costs to build a hospital, actually?

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I think it's important to note that that \$14 billion isn't just for the construction cost; it also includes the operating cost and the life cycle cost associated with that hospital for a 30-year period. So \$14 billion is actually not an accurate reflection of just the construction cost.

In terms of the current conditions of the construction market and some of the challenges around competition, I think two things have happened. One is, coming out of the pandemic, the private sector is less willing to take risks that they were previously around things like construction materials, inflation, supply chain constraints. So we've seen a decrease in the market's willingness to take risk. We've also seen an increase in the size and complexity of projects, and that also limits the pool of available bidders who are qualified to build projects of that size and complexity.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. Side note: As a private member of the Legislature, and maybe others are getting it too, we hear from whistle-blowers on various projects—issues and whatnot—but these massive P3s and the P3 procurement versus traditional procurement. Is there someone at Infrastructure Ontario we could talk to and highlight some of these extravagant, I would say, wastes of taxpayer dollars that I'm not at liberty to drop on this table right now? But I would be very happy to. Is that something that the ministry or Infrastructure Ontario—this isn't an estimates question. I'm just here; so are you.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I want to say, very clearly, through you, Chair, we will continue to use P3s, or private-public partnerships. That model has proven successful for major infrastructure projects where it makes sense.

IO uses a wide range of delivery models, which Ms. Clayton can point out in more detail. But the wide range of delivery models is to increase the probability of success, considering current market conditions—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —and the project type, the scale, the complexity and the risk profile—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —including the P3 model. Any more than that—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. And philosophically, you and I are diametrically opposed on what we think of P3s. We can have that conversation over lunch sometime.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** One can't argue with success, because they've proven very successful—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Well, and we define success differently. I would like us to save money and get good value for dollars.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Ms. Clayton can identify some of those successful achievements, if we could do that—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** It is my time—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —to fully answer the question.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** It is my time, and now I will ask the next question, because Ms. Clayton has answered that question about the \$14 billion.

In 2008, the Auditor General put out a report criticizing the procurement of the Brampton Civic Hospital, whose lifetime costs had risen to about \$1 billion, which the Auditor General said was about \$200 million more than what the hospital would have cost with traditional procurement—which is why, fundamentally, I have a problem with bad P3s, where we don't have transparency, but we have these massive cost overruns.

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Sixteen years later, the Auditor General is still criticizing Infrastructure Ontario, except hospital costs have risen by an order of magnitude and cost overruns are measured in billions now instead of millions.

My question is, how high do infrastructure costs need to rise before this ministry starts demanding more accountability, I would say, from Infrastructure Ontario about these procurement methods? We're seeing cost overruns in the billions, and we cannot possibly justify that. What will it take for the ministry to re-evaluate its support of these procurement methods?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Well, costs have risen—through you, Chair. That's well known to everyone—

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Point of order.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Excuse me, point of order, MPP Saunderson.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** The minister is choosing to answer.

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Thank you, Chair. This is a question as it relates to large infrastructure projects that come under another ministry, the Ministry of Health. If you're talking about procurement projects like hospitals, that's not under Infrastructure Ontario; that's the Ministry of Health.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** May I point out that the minister himself, the Minister of Infrastructure, here today, talked about hospitals—

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Sixty seconds.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** —and you just cut him off. Could the minister please continue his thought?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** No. I made a point of order, and that's through the Chair. If you want to make a comment about that—

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** There are 28 seconds left. If the Minister would like to add anything in the last 28 seconds, please go ahead.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I'd be happy to add that we intend to keep going, as the Premier would say. We're going to keep going, and we're going to support the Ministry of Health here at the Ministry of Infrastructure and through

Infrastructure Ontario in building and upgrading as many as 50 hospitals across Ontario, because that's what we owe the public. If we want to have a good, strong health care system, we've got to build that infrastructure and upgrade existing infrastructure, so we will keep going, Chair.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much. That's the time completed.

Now to the third party: MPP Watt, you've got 15 minutes.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Thank you, Chair. There seems to be a pattern in these estimates, at least as it pertains to operating expenses. You appear to lowball the estimated expenses for salary, wages, employee benefits and services. Specifically, in many instances, your interim expenses for 2024-25 are already higher than what you're projecting the cost in 2025-26.

Minister, is this ministry intentionally trying to hide wasteful or potentially more expensive expenditures?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Chair, what our ministry is committed to is serving the people of Ontario, investing in the present and the future of Ontario and in the infrastructure that all Ontarians need to move forward to achieve success—

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Sorry, I'm asking about—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —whether it's building new hospitals, new schools, roads, bridges, water systems—

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I'm asking about why the expenses are listed lower than what you spent last year—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —all of it we need to invest in. I'm proud to say that our—

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** There are too many people talking.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —GDP ratio, accordingly, is the best it's been in over a decade—

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Minister.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I'd like to bring it back to my question.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** I know sometimes it's frustrating. MPP Watt, it is your 15 minutes, so please, if you want to do a more direct question to the minister.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I want to bring it back to what the question was, not the initial talking points that you were given. I'm talking about how the interim expenses for 2024-25 are already higher than what you're projecting for next year. What's the reason for that?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** We are investing in infrastructure in a way that has never been seen before, and we are making up for lost ground that the member's party, when it formed government from 2003 to 2018, while in part, for some of that time, being supported by the party that now forms His Majesty's opposition—infrastructure was left to decay. We are making transformational—

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I'd like to bring it back to my question—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —investments to pick up the shattered pieces of a failed Liberal government. That's what we're doing, Chair.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I have no idea what the previous Liberal government has to do with my question. Again—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** It's the legacy, Chair, that was left to us, and that's why we have the confidence of

the people of Ontario for a third consecutive majority mandate to keep going, to keep investing and to build the Ontario of tomorrow for all Ontarians.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** All right. This isn't question period, Minister. The projected expenses are lower than what you spent last year. Again, why is that?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** In answer to that specific question, I will defer to the deputy minister.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Yes, absolutely. Two main reasons: The first is, the ministry, over the last year or year and a half, has gone through a lot of change with respect to broadband, Ontario Place—so a lot of ins and outs with respect to the finances.

The second thing is, we have major infrastructure programs that we either have existing or rolling out. The minister identified OCIF as one, the enabling infrastructure—these are going out to 400 municipalities, the enabling infrastructure around 185-plus municipalities. So we have a lot of projects, including other projects as well that we have, and the cash flow and the burn rate. There's fluctuation throughout with respect to fluctuation throughout the ministry and the size, the contracting and increasing, as well as the fluctuation and the burn rate with respect to those projects.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you. I just want to reiterate, though, that I'm asking about the minister's office specifically, not the programs. The salaries, employee benefits, wages and services are projected to be lower than what you spent last year. So what's the difference? To me, it seems like you're just hiding potentially wasteful spending.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** The Ministry of Infrastructure is fully transparent in terms of the estimates presented for the purposes of this committee's review—full transparency, full accountability and, I think, value for the investments that are being made on all fronts.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** All right. I'm going to move on. I'm referring to page 56. Why has the cost of services for the general real estate portfolio gone from \$68 million in 2023-24 to \$108 million estimated for next year?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** This is a question that touches upon the management of our real estate portfolio, which, as I've indicated, is the largest in Canada. But that specific question, I think, can be ably answered by the deputy minister or as he directs.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** I'll ask Bruce Singbush to come up and supplement.

With respect to the services and the management of the assets, a lot of the cost increase, whether they go up or down in any given year, is really to maintain the assets or properties we have. So in any given year, you can see fluctuation in terms of up or down.

**Mr. Bruce Singbush:** Thank you so much to, Deputy. Bruce Singbush, assistant deputy minister of the realty division.

Just to help in terms of responding to your question, can you specify the table that you are referring to in the estimates? You said page 56, but the table number will be helpful.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Page 56. Hold on; I'm going to have to find this. The first table.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** MPP Watt, is it on page 256, maybe?

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I'm not sure. It's all good. I'll move on to another question.

On page 18 specifically, why are we projecting a revenue loss from the general real estate portfolio for 2025-26 to the tune of \$24.5 million?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Back to the deputy minister and to the ministry official who has identified himself, now that that page has been referenced.

**Mr. Bruce Singbush:** What happens on certain real estate sales is it's the timing of transactions. We anticipate they may close in this year, and sometimes, for different reasons, depending on the proponents, they close in a subsequent year. So it's just a timing issue.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Thank you. Just on that, has the sale of provincial property and capital assets generated revenue for this year at the expense of sustainable income for operating expenses for our real estate?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** As I indicated in my opening remarks, but I have the officials to assist me with any further detail, in the past seven and a half years—that is, since 2018—the Ontario government has sold 145 surplus properties, which generated more than \$319 million. This is the other part of it: This has also reduced maintenance and operating costs by \$5.46 million each year.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** As the minister said, of the properties that have been sold, the target in terms of sale is a little over 400 in terms of assets so we can continue to generate the revenue.

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**MPP Tyler Watt:** Thank you.

Time?

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Seven minutes.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I'm going to bring it back to your favourite topic of Ontario Place. This government is spending approximately \$3.2 billion on the Ontario Place redevelopment and relocating the science centre. We know that no one is benefiting more than Therme. The Premier swore he would double- and triple-check the deal.

How much money has gone to redeveloping Ontario Place and relocating the science centre in the last year alone?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Well, let's be clear in answering the question that both sites, the Don Mills site for the science centre and the site of Ontario Place, were left to decay, were left in an abysmal state by the previous government. We picked up the pieces to revitalize Ontario Place and to relocate the science centre, first to the two interim sites that I've already referenced and ultimately to Ontario Place. Obviously, that requires an investment, that investment has been made, and the government has been rightly transparent about it. I have the deputy minister who can assist further, I believe.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Maybe Angela Clayton—

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I do want to interject, though: We know that the engineer report said that the roof could be fixed. So this has turned into a very expensive project. I am wanting to know how much money has been spent thus far.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** An independent board made the decision that there were safety concerns with the roof, based on engineering input, and that decision was made by the board. I think that safety has to be a fundamental concern, and it was a fundamental concern. We respect the board's decision on that.

Now, rather than looking backward, we prefer to look forward, looking forward to a new revitalized science centre at a new revitalized Ontario Place. With that, the Infrastructure Ontario representative can assist.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** No, that's okay. I'm satisfied. I appreciate that you want to look forward, yet you keep bringing up the Liberal government—especially from when I was a child, by the way. There's a whole new generation of us here.

The \$3.2 billion that we're going to end up spending on Ontario Place: How many hospitals could that build? How many schools could be repaired? How many roads and highways could we be building?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Those are very important questions because, I would say, Chair, very clearly and proudly, that we don't have to make a choice. We're choosing to build schools. We're choosing to build and upgrade hospitals across the province. We are choosing to revitalize Ontario Place as a world-class tourist destination with a new revitalized science centre—

**MPP Tyler Watt:** What about the \$16-billion school repair backlog?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** We're investing in the Ontario of today and the Ontario of tomorrow. Ontario leads Canada in terms of population and a place to grow and a place to prosper for all. All of these investments are going to make a difference in the decades to come for the better, and we're quite proud of leading that.

Infrastructure Ontario is a strong supporter and ally, and invaluable. After 20 years of existence, Infrastructure Ontario has a strong track record, and we look forward to another twenty years of success with Infrastructure Ontario by our side.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Well, you said you don't need to make a choice, but you are making a choice. You're choosing to spend \$3.2 billion on this vanity project instead of building hospitals, instead of investing in access to community health care, instead of fixing the \$16-billion school repair backlog.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I would encourage the member to read Dalton McGuinty's new book, the former Premier of Ontario. Chapter five talks about leading and growth. He says that leaders must do what is needed, not what is easy. I support that from a former Liberal Premier. That is what we're doing. We're taking up that call for leadership in 2025 and beyond. We are investing in infrastructure of all types. We are working with municipalities. We are working with the federal government, because we serve all

of the people. And there are many aspects to infrastructure—

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Sorry, but you think that—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** It's the tourist destination of Ontario Place and the new science centre. It's hospitals and health care. It's schools and education. It's roads. It's public transit.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Sorry, but a \$500-million parking garage is a part of that?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** It's transit-oriented communities and the model that that represents to enable housing.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** A \$500-million parking garage.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** We choose to do what's necessary, not necessarily what is easy.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** MPP Watt, go ahead.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Thank you. I appreciate this, because you are making your priorities clear. Ontarians do deserve to know. That's why I'm glad that we have this opportunity here. You're proud of the \$500-million parking garage. That's great. Why don't we put that money towards the school repair backlog? I don't understand. I thought we were all about common sense and getting back to basics. It's fascinating that we don't have money for so many important things in this province. We can't even get enough nurses in hospitals. But \$500 million for a parking garage—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I encourage the member to read the former leader of the Liberal Party's book. It's an excellent book—

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** One minute and 40 seconds left. MPP Watt, you have one minute and 40 seconds if you have some more questions.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Thank you.

I don't know where I want to go with this last minute here—

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** One minute and 30 seconds left.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Let me see. I'm looking here, on page 40. Why is the minister's office projecting expenses for his office to decrease from \$15 million to \$14.8 million in the last two years, to only \$12.9 million for 2025-26? Where are those savings coming from?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Chair, through you: We certainly welcome savings whenever possible, alongside transformational investments, but the deputy minister may be able to assist with the specifics of that question.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Yes. That will be based on the estimated FTE headcount and the other direct operating expenses that those FTEs would need. So it's every year; every department provides a budget in terms of how much they would need. Those budgets, though, as we work throughout the year, can fluctuate. As well, new priorities come on, whether it's on the staffing front or the other direct operating expenses are required.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** You have 20 seconds left if you want, MPP Watt—

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** He can just say, "Thank you, Minister, for coming," so I can do that.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Okay, MPP Anand, you're up, so just hold on.

You're okay? All right.

To the government side for 15 minutes: MPP Anand, are you beginning?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Absolutely, Madam Chair. Thank you so much for that opportunity.

Minister, first of all, congratulations on stepping up and supporting a fellow colleague. I know the Minister of Infrastructure just delivered a baby girl, and we want to wish her the best.

So many good things have been done by the government, and to do those things, we definitely need infrastructure. And we are thankful that we actually have a PA who's doing an incredible job as well.

My question is going to be based mostly on how we are supporting the Indigenous communities. Minister, as we know, Ontario continues to demonstrate a steadfast commitment to bolster both on and off-reserve communities' infrastructure projects, ensuring equitable development and prosperity across the province's diverse landscape. My question is, what is the government doing to help meet Indigenous communities' infrastructure needs in terms of the dollar value, with some examples as well?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Certainly, and I thank the member for the question. The steadfast commitment of our Ontario government to bolstering both on and off-reserve community infrastructure projects for Indigenous communities is second to none in terms of what we've seen in the past. We want to ensure that equitable development and prosperity occurs across the province's diverse landscapes, in particular our Indigenous communities.

Ontario is investing \$175 million in the health and safety water stream—that's the HSWS—and that is under the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program. Now, through this new stream, we are helping municipalities and First Nations build, expand or rehabilitate aging water, waste water, stormwater, flood and shoreline erosion infrastructure that is absolutely critical to address health and safety issues. The application intake process closed on July 10 of this year for First Nation applicants. All applicants are going to be notified in the very near future, before year end.

In addition, Ontario has provided funding to First Nations through a range of projects under the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund—that's the CWWF—and the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program—that's the ICIP. Funding through the ICIP COVID-19 resilience infrastructure stream includes support for Indigenous and on-reserve education-related infrastructure projects.

To give specific examples, if I may, to the member or to the entire committee: Under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, the Ontario government has invested in numerous First Nations and Indigenous projects. These include construction of the Shawanaga First Nation water treatment plant, with \$916,500 in the provincial contribution under the ICIP Green Infrastructure stream; and the Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation road rehabilitation, which included an investment of \$4.6 million in provincial funding under ICIP's supplementary rural and northern

projects, rehabilitating approximately 20 kilometres of road-way.

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Now, the Woodland Cultural Centre is an investment of approximately \$1.8 million under ICIP—that's the Community, Culture and Recreation stream. This aims to restore the Mohawk Institute building, to ensure that the legacy of residential schools in Canada is shared with the national and global communities, told through the lens of survivors. As the late, great Sir Winston Churchill once remarked, "A nation that forgets its history has no future." So, it is very, very important to support that investment.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chair, that's it for me.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** MPP Singh Grewal.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, team, and everyone coming out here today for estimates. Thank you, Minister, for being a good one.

When we take a look at small communities—especially during AMO, I've had the opportunity to talk a lot to our small, rural communities. A lot of the conversation that they had was along infrastructure development and funding related to infrastructure development.

I wanted to ask you today: How is our government going to support those smaller municipalities and rural communities with the infrastructure funding that they need? How has our government gone about taking the advice that we've received from them over the last couple of years to see how we've modified and changed this program to better support those municipalities? Have there been any increases in funding?

And what are we really doing to support our northern rural communities to ensure that they receive an adequate level of funding, as well? Because when we see big deals that we make with the city of Toronto, Brampton, Mississauga, the GTA, Niagara—all densely populated areas—our rural communities always feel like they're left out.

But I know over the last little while with consultations—and I want to thank our PA, Amarjot Sandhu, as well. I think he's taken a record-breaking—I don't know—over 70, 75 meetings at AMO. But what has our government done to take a look at their needs and adjust our programs accordingly to support them?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I appreciate the thoughtful question from the member.

Through you, Chair: The first aspect of this, of course, is that we have the formal conferences each and every year. There's AMO in August—which we met with all municipalities just this past August 2025. Minister Surma was there representing the Ministry of Infrastructure at that time, before her maternity leave and the birth of baby Georgia.

And then, of course, we have, upcoming in January, ROMA—the Rural Ontario Municipal Association—and then the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association in April. These are formal ways of meeting and having conversations and listening to our municipal partners.

But that is not the end of it. All throughout the year, this ministry, my other ministry—the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks—and all other ministries

are in regular conversation and contact with municipal leaders. That's an important thing, because it's not one-size-fits-all with 444 municipalities. The needs and the capacity of all of these different municipalities, large and small, really creates challenges.

I already did talk about the OCIF funding, through the Chair, in answer to one other member of the government side's questions. But I wanted to, perhaps in answering your question, specifically address what the Ministry of Infrastructure is doing to help communities that may not have the resources to complete this asset management plan that I've referenced earlier.

To ensure municipalities are supported and set up for success, the Ministry of Infrastructure, working in partnership with the Municipal Finance Officers' Association, continues to deliver what I would say are practical tools and resources through the AMP It Up 3.0 Program. Now, this initiative empowers communities to strengthen their asset management planning. This will allow them to make smarter infrastructure investments and build for the future with confidence. They need our help and support, and we want to provide it to them. That's what being a good partner is.

That is also recognizing that different municipalities have different abilities with respect to asset management planning. The program helps municipalities to develop and maintain their asset management plans over the long term, to obtain expert advice and guidance, and provides continued support through consulting assistance.

Resources provided through the AMP It Up 3.0 Program include:

- coaching and assistance: one-on-one consulting for municipalities with a population of less than 5,000 to help them meet regulatory timelines;

- group workshops: detailed workshops on various topics to help these smaller municipalities complete the work required to comply with the regulation; and

- communities of practice: the cohort-based working groups that will enhance knowledge sharing and partnerships between and among municipalities with similar infrastructure needs to help incentivize municipalities to work together to achieve common goals.

These asset management tools and supports, I believe, will continue to help communities in developing and maintaining their asset management plans in the long term. That's good news for Ontarians in those smaller communities, who we serve diligently with our municipal partners representing those communities.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** MPP Babikian, please.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you, Minister, and the staff for coming today and presenting such an uplifting and good-news estimates to the committee and, through the committee, to the people of Ontario.

I am surprised that some of the committee members are doing a disservice to the people of Ontario. Instead of focusing on these good-news projects that will affect their families for future generations to come, they are focusing on issues which are not part of the estimates. For example,

P3 projects like hospitals are not part of the infrastructure ministry estimates, or other issues that have been repeated.

I wanted you to talk about the regulatory approval delays that many of these projects are facing because those delays affect timelines and budgets. What is the ministry doing to help address infrastructure gaps and prevent delays for major infrastructure projects across Ontario, so that we can deliver those projects on time and on budget?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Through you, Chair: I thank the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for the question. It's very thoughtful and very timely, because we do have to be prepared for the gaps that can occur. And so our \$200-billion, 10-year investment plan is focused on delivering results, and that means being prepared for potential gaps. We are focused on delivering results that include creating jobs and securing a stronger future for families across Ontario.

Through improved data and evidence-based planning, innovative approaches to procurement and enhanced oversight, our government is improving its infrastructure planning, procurement and delivery practices. This is about driving value for taxpayers, accelerating project timelines and ensuring critical infrastructure gets built, not delayed. This data gathering and analysis is—actually, now we're seeing the results. It's helping to improve our roads, bridges, transit systems, hospitals, schools and other public buildings, through, for example, targeting renewal and expansion funding in a more proactive manner to areas of greatest need. It also provides us with more comparable evidence of infrastructure needs within and across sectors to help prioritize infrastructure investments.

Just recently—I referenced this already, and I put it on my social media—the IO market update was released. It primarily reflects the significant progress that we are making in delivering on our committed projects and programs as they move through further government approvals and planning, procurement tendering and construction.

I'm pleased to report that since the June 2025 market update, four major infrastructure projects have indeed advanced to either the development phase or the contract execution. These include the all-important Garden City Skyway twinning, the Yonge North subway extension advance tunnel project, the Eglinton Crosstown West extension—that's stations, rails and systems—and phase 2 of the William Osler Health System's Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness.

Each of these projects represents real progress, creating jobs, improving connectivity and strengthening public services. They will deliver lasting benefits for communities across our province, and they are clear examples, I submit, of how strategic investments are building a strong and more resilient province, protecting Ontario.

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Additionally, we will continue to use private-public partnerships, P3s, for major infrastructure projects where it makes sense and when appropriate, guided by the strong track record of Infrastructure Ontario's leadership in this area. Our agency, Infrastructure Ontario, does use a wide range of delivery models to increase the probability of

success, considering current market conditions and the project type, scale, complexity and the risk profile, including that P3 model.

Now, the P3 model typically applies to public sector projects with a capital cost of over \$100 million or projects that involve significant risk and complexity. Increasingly, these complex projects, market dynamics and industry trends have led to the need for new, creative partnerships—

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** One minute.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —to facilitate successful project delivery.

Infrastructure Ontario, led by Angela Clayton, works closely with public sector project owners and sponsors to deliver projects successfully in partnership with the private sector, delivering successful results and successful outcomes. We've implemented legislative measures to ensure speed-up and safeguards.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** There's 29 seconds left, if anybody would like it on the government side—29 seconds, down to 25. Going, going, gone.

The final round, which will be 10 minutes and 20 seconds, goes to the official opposition. MPP French.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Just for the record, I chose not to interrupt the minister as he spoke so eloquently about P3s and hospitals, which I got point-of-ordered for not being allowed to discuss—just a fun fact there. And when I did ask why the minister was able to talk about hospitals, it was MPP Anand who said it's because he's kind, so I thought I would return the favour and not interrupt.

But moving forward: Is it true that the government is no longer funding new GO stations and that if municipalities want new GO stations, they will need to raise the funds themselves to pay for them?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** We are committed to transit-oriented communities, through a number of locations along both the subway, the GO Transit and LRT lines. Our government is ensuring that affordable housing units and attainable housing units will be available at planned transit-oriented communities.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** And I—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** The province will work, then, with local municipalities on a site-by-site basis to identify how housing outcomes, such as affordable housing and other community benefits, will be provided.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Chair, I'm going to reclaim my time.

Minister, I do have questions about transit-oriented communities, but specifically this one: It used to be that the provincial government paid for provincial infrastructure, including train stations. So my question is, is it a fair assessment that if a municipality wants new GO stations, they will have to raise the funds themselves to pay for them? Is that a fair characterization?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Well, there are planned transit stations and then there are ones that the municipalities wish to pursue. I can refer to my deputy minister with respect to the difference.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Future questions around stations, building of stations, the predictability or the capacity of stations and whatnot should be referred to the Ministry of Transportation. With respect to what the Ministry of Infrastructure is responsible for, it is helping municipalities that want a station that is outside of a current plan, and we are providing a transit station charge to help them enable a transit station that they want to bring forward.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. And for reasons that—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** This is an optional tool, the transit station charge.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Well, if they want a station, it is a tool.

For reasons that I still don't understand, the Ministry of Infrastructure is responsible for the GO Transit Station Funding Act, which the government enacted in 2023. I think that is connected, Mr. Veshkini, to what we're talking about, that MTO would be for other stations, but infrastructure is responsible for what I'm talking about now, which is the act that created a new tax that municipalities can levy on developments near GO Transit stations.

It's my understanding that the regulations have finally been crafted. On the one hand, the government is limiting the ability of municipalities to use development charges to pay for municipal infrastructure, but on this hand, the ministry is giving municipalities the ability to use a new development charge to pay for provincial infrastructure.

I would like maybe for you to explain the thinking.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** As stated—but this is further to that—the transit station charge is available as an optional tool. That's available at the choice of a municipality if that municipality wishes to expedite the process of building new GO stations, while recovering it over time as homes are built around the station.

Development charges are different. They help municipalities recover a portion of growth-related capital costs incurred to provide services to new residents and businesses.

What we are doing—Chair, through you—is we are working closely with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure that the transit station charge does not become an additional burden to new housing getting built.

The Ministry of Infrastructure, and in particular whoever the minister is, whether it's the acting minister—at this time, me—or Minister Surma, must always sign off on the use of the TSC by a particular community.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. You and I both are in the same neck of the woods, and we know that Durham region is—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** We share the great municipality of Oshawa.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** We share Oshawa, and I think we share it well. Minister, I know that the region of Durham is proud of the work that they had done with government to ensure that they had a way to build these stations. As you said, it's an optional tool at the choice of the municipality to expedite the process of building stations.

If a municipality wants a station but they don't reach for this tool, does that mean they can't have a station, or they just have to fundraise for themselves?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** The idea, as I said, is that it's a choice. We want to support municipalities in every way we can. But it's never one-size-fits-all, and we've got to be able to give options. That's why the transit station charge is available as an optional tool.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you. Time?

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Four minutes and 50 seconds.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay.

The ministry is planning to spend \$200 million on the East Harbour transit-oriented community this year, as per page 39 of the detailed financials. Maybe this is to the deputy minister or to whomever: Specifically what is this money for? Who is this money being transferred to?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** On East Harbour, I'm familiar with the project, but I believe the deputy minister can fill us in on the details.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Absolutely. The \$200 million is a part of a tri-part investment with the municipality as well as the federal government. It's really to ensure that those lands in the East Harbour are not a part of the flood plains anymore so that the future station and any housing moving forward can be developed appropriately and not be flooded.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** We need to implement this flood protection to ensure this vibrant mixed-use community comes to be.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. And further to that vibrant mixed-use, will there be affordable housing in the East Harbour transit-oriented community?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** It's going to be a vibrant mixed-use community that will include a diverse range of commercial and residential space; that, I can assure the member. That includes—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Affordable housing specifically?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** —retail, food, cultural uses and public amenities. It won't be one-size-fits-all. There will be a range of residential space.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Will there be affordable housing in this vibrant, mixed-use—

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** The answer is yes. The short answer is yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Okay. I like short answers.

I might have a little bit of time left. The whole idea behind the transit-oriented community program is that by giving developers the right to build near transit, there will be a surplus value that can be captured to pay for things like GO stations.

Earlier this month, we learned that the transit-oriented community at Park Lawn was in trouble because the development partner couldn't make the numbers work. The Mimico transit-oriented community remains a hole in the ground after that development partner went into receivership.

Is the transit-oriented community program in trouble?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Through you, Chair: The head of Infrastructure Ontario, Ms. Clayton, has rejoined us.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you, Ms. Clayton.

**Ms. Angela Clayton:** I would say that there are broader challenges across the housing development sector right now beyond just transit-oriented communities. There are a number of new housing developments that have stalled because of the increased cost of construction, the cost of development charges and other challenges.

So yes, there are some of the transit-oriented community projects that have not progressed at the pace that we had initially anticipated, but that is reflective of the broader, current economic state in the housing market, not specific to transit-oriented communities.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Thank you.

Any time left?

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Yes, you have two minutes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Two minutes, okay.

I had the opportunity to serve for a while as chair of the procedure and House affairs committee. I'm not anymore, so I'm not in that loop, but I do know that the renovation and restoration of Queen's Park seemed to fall at the feet of the Ministry of Infrastructure, despite the fact that it's still the government House leader in charge of it, as per the legislation.

How do we see that progressing? What's next?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** Well, we are blessed to have a parliamentary democracy and to be able to represent 124 communities here collectively in this historic building which opened in April 1893—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** No, no, I don't want the history of this one. I was on that committee. I know it.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** But I want to talk about what the next 132 years looks—

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Whoever's debating, it's 60 seconds left.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Are we decanting? Where's the next location? What's happening?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** The Board of Internal Economy, of course, is responsible for this. It's a non-partisan—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I know. I was there.

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** I believe now the Liberal Party has an official representative on the Board of Internal Economy, so it's truly an all-party effort—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Is it still before the Ministry of Infrastructure, and are things proceeding?

**Hon. Todd J. McCarthy:** There's no question that the Ministry of Infrastructure and me as acting minister play a

role in making recommendations to the Board of Internal Economy, and it's a work in progress.

I think the deputy could, perhaps, add to that.

**Mr. Ali Veshkini:** Absolutely. We're still looking at decant locations; working through safety, security. We're also doing the functional programming with respect to this building, looking at the planning and how we would undertake that work as well.

So whether it's with respect to the actual planning of this building and the decant, we're still working through those. We will be reporting through the Board of Internal Economy, and we'll ensure that we will keep them apprised as we move forward.

**The Chair (Hon. Laurie Scott):** Thank you. That concludes our very spirited committee's consideration of the 2025-26 estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure.

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

Shall vote 4001, ministry administration program, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I declare vote 4001 is carried.

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

Shall vote 4006, government real estate, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I declare vote 4006 is carried accordingly.

Shall vote 4007, infrastructure partnership projects and agency oversight, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I declare vote 4007 is accordingly carried.

Shall the 2025-26 estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I declare that it is carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2025-26 estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I declare that carried.

That concludes our consideration of this ministry's estimates. I'd like to thank Minister McCarthy and everyone here today for their participation.

There being no further business, this committee stands adjourned until 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 6, 2025, when we will consider the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation.

*The committee adjourned at 1704.*









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