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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

P-8

**Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

Special Report,
Auditor General:

Report on Progress to Reduce
Greenhouse Gas Emissions

1st Session
44th Parliament

Monday 23 March 2026

**Comité permanent des
comptes publics**

Rapport spécial,
vérificatrice générale:

Rapport sur les progrès réalisés
pour réduire les émissions
de gaz à effet de serre

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Lundi 23 mars 2026

Chair: Tom Rakocevic
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Tom Rakocevic
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Monday 23 March 2026

Lundi 23 mars 2026

The committee met at 1345 in room 151, following a closed session.

2025 SPECIAL REPORT,
AUDITOR GENERAL
MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT,
CONSERVATION AND PARKS
MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND MINES
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD
AND AGRIBUSINESS

Consideration of Report on Progress to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): I would like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to order. We are here to begin consideration of the Report on Progress to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Joining us today are officials from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Ministry of Energy and Mines, Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. You will have 20 minutes collectively for an opening presentation to the committee. We will then move into the question-and-answer portion of the meeting, where we will rotate back and forth between the government, official opposition and third party caucuses in 20-minute intervals.

Before you begin, the Clerk will administer the oath of witness or affirmation—just asking those who are in the front, and if you should need to call someone behind you to speak at some point during the meeting, we will then ask for an oath or affirmation at that time. Please begin.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Sarah Harrison, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: I do.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Susanna Laaksonen-Craig, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: I do.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Tamara Gilbert, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: I do.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): John Kelly, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Mr. John Kelly: I do.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We invite each of you to introduce yourselves for the first time for Hansard before you begin speaking—again, just the first time you begin to speak. Thank you very much for being here, and please begin when ready.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Sarah Harrison, Deputy Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Chair and members, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear today before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, or MECP for short, is committed to transparency and accountability to the people of Ontario as we work to deliver on our vision of an Ontario with clean and safe air, land and water that leads to healthier communities and economic prosperity. I'm happy to address the Auditor General's recommendations in the 2025 Report on Progress to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, because the effort to reduce GHGs is a shared responsibility across government.

I'm joined today by my counterparts at the Ministries of Transportation, Energy and Mines and Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. I'm also joined by my colleagues from MECP, who will help answer any questions that you may have.

Ontario's climate change policies and programs are working to reduce and prevent greenhouse gas emissions and increase resilience to the impacts of a changing climate, and we have made significant progress. Since 2005, our reductions of 43.7 megatonnes of GHGs have surpassed those of any other province or territory. That's a reduction by Ontario of 21.6%, with Canada's overall reduction at 8.5%. It's fair to say, then, that we are leaders in GHG reductions in Canada.

While Ontario makes up about 39% of Canada's population and GDP, our emissions in 2023 accounted for only 23% of Canada's total emissions. We have achieved those reductions while also growing the economy over the same time frame, with Ontario's real GDP growing by 34%.

I'd now like to briefly respond to each of the Auditor General's recommendations. The auditor's first recommendation was, "In accordance with the act's requirement to set targets," the auditor recommends "that MECP propose additional targets for adoption by the province that provide a goal for continued GHG emissions reductions beyond 2030."

The ministry does not support the recommendation. The global economy is vastly different today than it was just a year ago, with the uncertainty and upheaval caused by President Trump's tariffs. This has meant that the government must focus on protecting the province by creating a more competitive, resilient and self-reliant economy.

Ontario's decision to amend the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act related to this recommendation, as well as recommendations 2 and 3, is about ensuring that climate policy remains effective, flexible and aligned with the province's broader goals. Ontario remains committed to long-term decarbonization, and this ministry will continue to evaluate, consider and advise on approaches to reducing GHG emissions beyond 2030.

The second recommendation of the auditor was to:

"—prepare and consult ... on an updated climate change plan that outlines ... plans to meet ... current, and any future, targets to reduce GHG emissions;

"—following consultation, publish an approved, finalized climate change plan; and

"—regularly review and update the plan to ... reflect any changes to planned initiatives...."

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The ministry does not support the recommendation. Due to the current global economic situation, the province cannot strictly adhere to a path or actions that do not account for current, future and unknown economic opportunities and challenges facing Ontario—including those related to the province's long-term decarbonization objectives.

Ontario will remain committed to its adaptable and agile approach that is responsive to the opportunities, needs and circumstances of Ontario's economy and job creators. This ministry remains committed to adhering to public consultation requirements and will remain transparent in respect of its approach to fighting climate change.

The auditor's third recommendation is MECP should "report annually to the public on progress made to reduce GHG emissions in Ontario...." This would include "updates on the implementation of initiatives taken to reduce GHG emissions and the status of Ontario's GHG emissions."

The ministry does not support this recommendation and remains committed to transparency in its approach to fighting climate change. Annual public information on

Ontario's progress in reducing emissions is already available through the national inventory report and emissions projections, which are published yearly by the federal government.

And finally, the fourth recommendation of the auditor was that "MECP request yearly updates from each body responsible for any federal or provincial initiative included in a GHG emissions projection to confirm the validity and accuracy of all policy assumptions whenever making a new projection."

The ministry supports the recommendation. To this end, MECP will continue to employ best practices in its GHG emissions projection analysis. It will evaluate and update GHG emissions projections based on the most recent data and information available, informed by internal and external experts.

MECP already utilizes the Navius Research Inc.'s peer-reviewed energy economy macroeconomic model called gTech and follows best practices to regularly update the model and reflect the latest emission data, economic trends and policy developments. We also review new MECP initiatives to update projections on at least an annual basis, as well as for policies, commitments announced in Ontario and federal budgets, or updates to the federal emissions reduction plan.

To summarize, Ontario will continue to take an adaptable and agile approach to reducing GHGs that is responsive to the needs of our economy. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks will continue to focus on achieving our climate change objectives while we prioritize the needs arising out of the economic uncertainty facing the province. As we work on long-term decarbonization, we will continue to evaluate and consider best approaches reducing GHGs beyond 2030.

I'd like to thank the committee for their time and now pass it to my colleague, Deputy Minister Susanna Laaksonen-Craig, to explain how the Ministry of Energy and Mines is reducing GHG emissions in Ontario.

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: My name is Susanna Laaksonen-Craig. I'm the Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines. It is my pleasure to appear before this committee in response to the Auditor General's Report on Progress to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Ontario.

Regarding GHGs, Ontario has one of the cleanest electricity grids in the world. In the 2024 report entitled *Powering Ontario's Growth*, we highlighted this fact. The carbon intensity of electricity in Ontario is seven times lower than in New York state and 17 times lower than in Michigan. We are able to provide reliable and affordable electricity today, while we are decades ahead of our neighbours on decarbonization. This is largely because nuclear and hydroelectric power make up the bulk of our electricity system, and both are virtually emissions-free.

Nuclear power currently provides around 50% of Ontario's energy supply and was a key reason the province was able to eliminate coal-fired electricity generation more than a decade ago—an achievement that still stands as the single-largest greenhouse gas reduction on the continent.

Today, Ontario's green electricity makes up 21% of end-use energy consumption, accounting for just 4.3% of the province's total emissions. As the auditor's report acknowledges, that's lower than any other sector, including transportation, industry buildings, agriculture or waste. As more homes and businesses turn to electrification, we expect the percentage of electricity to grow steadily in terms of end-use energy consumption.

Last year, the Ontario government released Energy for Generations. This plan highlights numerous ways we will continue to have a low-carbon electricity system. New and refurbished nuclear generation and hydroelectric facilities will continue to be the backbone of our system. Competitive energy procurements will bring more renewable energy and battery storage to the mix.

We have a new 12-year energy-efficiency framework that includes new programs for homes and businesses, and we are building out our transmission system to connect power to more end-users.

We have just completed the Darlington nuclear refurbishment and the Bruce refurbishment is well under way. Both these projects are proving that we can manage nuclear projects on time and on budget, and we will start executing the Pickering refurbishment in early 2027.

As refurbishments are completed and new nuclear generation comes online, starting with four small modular reactors in Darlington in 2030 to 2035, emissions from electricity generation are expected to decline significantly.

I also want to stress that we have many options for procuring more power over this time if we see any gap emerging between demand and supply.

We are about to announce the results of the first window of the second long-term competitive energy and capacity procurement known as LT2. More of these procurements are scheduled in the near future. The Independent Electricity System Operator also conducts annual capacity auctions to balance the system at the best possible price. This highlights one of the great strengths of Ontario's electricity system: We are not beholden to any one technology. We have a diverse supply mix and the ability to procure power in many different ways.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocvic): Ten minutes remaining.

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: Thanks to these investments in construction, refurbishment and procurements, our Energy for Generations plan includes forecasts that show a sharp decline in the mid-2030s as new supply comes online. GHG emissions then decline to almost zero in the late 2040s.

In closing, I would like to reinforce some key points. The electricity sector is the least-emitting sector of those tracked in this report. Electricity enables other sectors to reduce their own emissions. And while we do have a short-term increase in emissions while nuclear refurbishments and construction are under way, we have a clear and public path to nearly zero emissions from the sector before 2025.

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Good afternoon. Tamara Gilbert, assistant deputy minister of the Ministry of Transportation's integrated policy and planning division. I appreciate the

opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on behalf of the Ministry of Transportation, or MTO.

MTO plays a crucial role in Ontario's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We take this responsibility seriously. Our ministry is carrying out the largest transit expansion in North America and the largest subway expansion in Canadian history. These projects will lower the number of vehicles on Ontario's roads and reduce GHG emissions. We're also helping municipalities transition to hybrid and electric buses for their transit fleets, and we're also encouraging drivers to switch to electric vehicles and embracing sustainable construction practices and highway projects across the province.

Here in Toronto, the Finch West LRT and the Line 5 Eglinton, also known as the Eglinton Crosstown, are now open to the public. These rapid transit lines are making life easier for thousands of daily commuters and substantially reducing our emissions. By 2027, the Finch West LRT is estimated to reduce GHG emissions by 17,000 tonnes annually, and Line 5 Eglinton is expected to reduce annual GHG emissions by 12,000 tonnes.

Those numbers are just the start. Priority transit projects are currently under way. There's a number of additional projects currently under way, including the Ontario Line, Scarborough subway extension, Yonge North subway extension, Eglinton Crosstown West extension and the Hazel McCallion Line. Collectively, these projects are expected to reduce GHG emissions by an estimated 39,000 tonnes each year.

There's also the progress on the province's GO expansion program, which will bring faster and more frequent service to GO Transit's busiest rail routes and is expected to take more than 145,000 cars off the road each day and cut emissions by 480,000 tonnes annually.

MTO has also helped a number of municipal transit agencies across the province transition to hybrid and electric buses through our contributions to the public transit stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. This provincial funding has gone towards purchasing low- and zero-emission transit vehicles in Oakville, Waterloo, Brampton, North Bay and other municipalities.

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Our ministry is also helping Ontario drivers make the switch to electric vehicles. Through our EV chargeON program, MTO is increasing the number of public EV charging stations across the province. This will reduce range anxiety, fill gaps in underserved areas and make charging infrastructure more accessible and affordable.

We continually strive to lessen our carbon footprint when it comes to highway construction projects. MTO's GreenPave rating system encourages the use of recycled materials, alternate fuels and shorter hauling distances at job sites. Up to 20% of the aggregates we use for highway projects are also recycled. Our use of warm-mix asphalt has the potential to lower asphalt plant emissions by between 15% and 20% and can reduce fuel consumption by between 20% and 35%.

As our ministry continues to deliver these and other priorities Ontarians depend on, we remain committed to lowering our emissions and prioritizing sustainability. With that said, I'll turn it over to John Kelly, deputy of agriculture, food and agribusiness. Thank you so much.

Mr. John Kelly: Thank you. I'm John Kelly, deputy minister for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

Thank you to the committee members for inviting me today. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to talk about our ministry's efforts regarding environmental stewardship and stewardship activities that Ontario supports in greenhouse gas reductions. I'd also like to thank Deputy Harrison for her ministry's leadership on this important work.

Environmental stewardship is a significant priority for Ontario farmers and agribusinesses. OMAFA supports stewardship initiatives that help farmers and agribusinesses adapt to a changing climate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

While many of these programs are voluntary, in many cases, sustainable practices, in addition to being beneficial to the environment, also have economic benefits to farmers. This supports broad interest and uptake of our stewardship programs.

The sector benefits from the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership, or SCAP for short, which is a five-year, federal-provincial-territorial investment to strengthen the sector's competitiveness, innovation and resiliency. The current agreement, in place from 2023 to 2028, has identified tackling climate change and environmental protection as one of five priority areas.

By the end of the current agreement, the federal-provincial-territorial partners have agreed to contribute towards reducing Canada's greenhouse emissions by three to five megatonnes. In Ontario alone, a total of \$65.8 million in combined provincial and federal SCAP funding is earmarked to be spent on activities that can reduce emissions or sequester carbon. SCAP funding currently supports multiple programs and initiatives that are directly helping Ontario farmers reduce emissions and sequester carbon, with more than 1,500 projects approved to date.

One great example is the Resilient Agriculture Landscape Program, or RALP. This program supports farmers in undertaking projects that science and research have shown to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon, like reducing tillage and planting trees. The short- and long-term economic benefits that come from sustainable practices, like reduced input costs and increased productivity, profitability and resiliency, incentivize uptake of these and other voluntary programs.

The ministry also provides environmental stewardship education and outreach to farmers and to agribusinesses. This ranges from directly connecting with farmers by attending farm shows and supporting workshops across Ontario to providing free online decision-making tools any farmer can access and use to help inform on-farm production decisions. Farmers can even get access to online greenhouse gas decision support tools.

I would note that while OMAFA does not directly measure or report on greenhouse gas emissions, we do share program information with the federal government to support their responsibilities for national reporting on greenhouse gases.

Once again, thanks for the opportunity to speak with you today. I'll now turn it back to Deputy Harrison.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We're just at about two minutes.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Chair, thank you for the time. I think we've said our comments.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Okay. Thank you.

This week, we will proceed in the following rotation: 20 minutes to the third party member, 20 minutes to the official opposition, 20 minutes to the government. And we will follow this rotation for two rounds.

We will now begin with MPP Fairclough.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you to all four of you for coming today and presenting to us.

I'll be sharing my time with my colleague MPP McMahon over the course of both of the sessions.

I do want to start at a high level. When I read this report, this is how I would summarize it: Ontario was on a good trajectory to reduce our emissions. Before 2018, one of the most important decisions that we made was to eliminate coal plants, and that has been the single-largest reduction—I think somebody said 17%—that we've seen. Then we enter into 2018, and basically the report says that we eliminated a lot of the policies that were actually helping to contribute to that curve around reduction. We had a draft plan for many years, but it never got finalized. And now it's clear that as a province, we won't set a clear target. And then we actually repealed the legislation that required us to have targets or a plan. That's how I read the Auditor General's report. I find it interesting—because you've given some examples of things that you think are contributing well to this.

What I want to understand is, really, why have all the recommendations of the Auditor General been rejected? Presumably, everybody in this room cares about the future of our planet. I've got teenage boys; I think we all get motivated to make sure there's a strong future for them. I think all of us, in our communities, say we see more forest fires or we see more floods or we see the financial impact for families and our communities of insurance costs etc. So I think everybody is motivated. So what is the explanation for why the draft plan was never finalized? And was it really the direction of the government to not have a plan?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Thank you, member, for the question. I'm happy to begin this. There was quite a lot wrapped into your question.

I would say that what you have seen is the Ministry of the Environment, along with colleague ministries, make a number of investments in Ontario's economy that have led to the reduction that we've seen in GHG reductions, and the government is proud of that reduction. But the government is not prepared at this point to commit to a climate plan that would preclude us from having the agility that we are looking for and the adaptability that we're

looking for with so many of the uncertainties that are ahead. The government remains committed, the ministry remains committed to working with our partners, but at this point, having a plan that prescribes targets or prescribes the path to it actually is not helpful because it means that we're making decisions about uncertainties that we can't be clear about now. I think it's more transparent, I think it's more flexible to report on our reductions. We do that annually through the federal report and continue to make the policy commitments and the investments in the economy that we have.

A number of my colleagues, I'm sure, would like to contribute to that, to speak even more in detail about some of the investments that we've seen on the ground. But the government is not committed at this time to a climate change plan.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: That's clear, then. It was really their choice to not put a plan in place.

You said in your opening as well—again, at a high level—you're going to continue to monitor and report, but really have no actions tied to what trends we might be seeing around emissions in that time. Is that a fair statement? So we're going to report for the sake of reporting, but we're not going to have that reporting drive any action in this area?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: I'll begin, and maybe I'll ask my colleague.

The government is not making a presumption that the report has to drive the activities and that there are a number of decisions that are made on a responsive basis to changes that weren't anticipated, in some cases. And what we're seeing, too, are some emerging economic changes. The plan can't reasonably foresee that, but the decisions that are made in real time are more responsive to it.

I'll ask my colleague if he would like to contribute.

1410

Mr. Alex Wood: Sure. Alex Wood, I'm the assistant deputy minister for the climate change and resiliency division in the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): You need to take an oath. Stop the time.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Alex Wood, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Mr. Alex Wood: I do.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Thank you.

Mr. Alex Wood: Maybe to pick up on a couple of points that you've made, I think it's important to distinguish between the existing plan and a new plan.

The deputy's earlier answer, I think, is in relation to government decision-making around a future plan, given the uncertain context that we find ourselves in. But we continue to deliver on the existing plan, and a lot of the measures—for my ministry to track and my division to

deliver on—are tied to that 2018 plan, which continues to be the plan that we deliver on.

Insofar as it comes to reporting progress on that, as part of the answer that was provided earlier in the deputy's introductory remarks, we are part of an exercise that is national in scope. The federal government issues its national inventory report every year that reports on the state of emissions in the country, but also breaks down provincially what those emissions look like. And so our reporting is usually a reflection of what the federal exercise has generated. All of the numbers that you have seen described in terms of our reductions—absolute reductions, percentage reductions—are a reflection of those federal numbers, that NIR. That process will continue. We will have a new NIR at some point this year showing Ontario's emissions, and that's the reporting framework that we'll continue to use.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: But it is fair to say that the government basically has made a choice, though, not to have any targets—certainly not targets beyond 2030. They've repealed the legislation that requires them to have a plan and to set those targets, which some would argue maybe signals the level of priority that this has for them as a government.

Mr. Alex Wood: It's not really my job to argue that, one way or another.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Yes, but it is true, right, that this is what has happened? We've cancelled the legislation that would actually create responsibility for the government to be clear on what their ongoing targets will be. Many other provinces have targets that go out to 2040—that was in the report as well. My biggest concern, I think, with this whole report and the response to it is that the government doesn't seem to have any commitment, actually, to making sure that we're going to continue to reach those targets.

Mr. Alex Wood: I would just point to the delivery of the existing programs that we have in place. One of the programs my division manages—you mentioned performance programs—so this is an industrial carbon pricing program that we have in place. It continues to do some heavy lifting when it comes to the reduction of emissions from the industrial sector, one of the important emission sources in the province. It is a program that has been identified by independent entities, like the Canadian Climate Institute, as probably the most important instrument in use in Canada, across Canada—whether provincially or federally—to reduce emissions. The government is committed to that program and continues to deliver on that program.

The deputy and some of the other deputies spoke to some of the existing initiatives and investments that the government continues to implement.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Given the government has moved towards, though, the elimination of GHG emission targets and reporting altogether, was that recommendation put forward to them by the public sector, to actually remove that requirement?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, we're not at liberty to speak to the advice that we give the minister in making

cabinet-related decisions, but we understood that the minister was looking to explore a number of considerations, and that was among information that was provided by the public service.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: That was among the options that were given, to stop—okay. Was there a scientific rationale behind the decision to not do it, to not continue to set targets.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Just over 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. Alex Wood: I guess I would point out, to maybe quibble a bit, the fact that those particular sections of the act have been repealed does not mean the government cannot set targets for GHG reductions. It continues to be committed to the targets that it has already set for itself, and so that distinction is important to point out.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Okay. If it is possible, I would like to request any documentation the committee can get on what led to the decision to repeal the legislation and to no longer have targets in place. Can I make that request through the Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): I mean, the committee has to agree to it, but we can come back to that—

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Can you follow up on that?

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): —perhaps after, yes.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Okay. That's great. And I guess I would just ask maybe the last question, and then I'm going to turn it to my colleague. Is it your perspective that in removing these targets, Ontario will be better equipped to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Do you think targets are useful to make sure that we keep our eye on that reduction?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: I'll begin by just saying that I don't think the presence of targets predetermines whether or not emissions will be reduced. The government remains committed, the ministry is looking for opportunities through our partners, and in the presence or without the presence of targets, that remains the commitment of the government.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you for coming in today and sharing your—what shall I say—I guess stance with us.

So, first off, to Deputy Minister Sarah Harrison: You mentioned that Ontario is basically a leader in greenhouse gas reductions across Canada. That's what I surmised. I wonder how much of that is attributed to the closure of the coal plants.

Mr. Alex Wood: Yes. Well, as I think the deputy mentioned or others mentioned—maybe Deputy Laaksonen-Craig—Ontario has always been very public and proud about the substantial reductions that were achieved by the closure of the coal plants. The numbers around that are between 20 and 25 megatonnes of reductions. But right now, we're at a total reduction for the province, since 2005, of 43 megatonnes. The basic math is maybe half of those reductions come from that single—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Then why wouldn't you want to report on that, and why—I think Sarah Harrison mentioned about being transparent. So do you not think that annual reporting on that to the public is transparent?

Mr. Alex Wood: Reporting of what nature? One of the methodological nuances here in terms of reporting is those reductions are essentially counted in our baseline now, right? We don't stack those on top of what emissions would have been if we hadn't closed the coal plants. They are now part of the business as usual in Ontario, and so we measure against that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, the Auditor General has asked you to report, and you have said no. Do you not think the public deserves to hear from you? I mean, how often is it that an Auditor General takes all the time to do a report and then not one of the recommendations, basically, are accepted?

Mr. Alex Wood: Actually, one of them was accepted, out of—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, so one.

My question is, specifically, Deputy Minister Sarah Harrison, do you believe in climate change?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: I do.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. And do you believe there is a high cost to inaction and not acting on putting forth any climate action?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: While I appreciate the nature of the member's question, I think my personal beliefs and views are outside of the interests of the committee today, talking about the Auditor General's responses and recommendations, and our responses to them. So, I respectfully think that I'd ask the Chair whether or not that question falls within the scope of today's proceedings.

1420

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, the Financial Accountability Officer is very concerned about the high cost of inaction—and he has put a price tag on that—so I thought you might be as well.

I'll go on to Tamara Gilbert. Do you believe a strong investment in physically separated cycling infrastructure would lead to a reduction in greenhouse gases?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Similar to Deputy Harrison, I think my personal views are not the matter of interest for the committee.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. What is your ministry doing to that end, for cycling infrastructure? Because we actually know it reduces greenhouse gases. I didn't hear that in your introduction.

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Thank you for the question. There is one statistic that I find very useful: As of 2025, approximately 2,100 kilometres of bike routes on provincial rights-of-way have been established since 2018, as one example of the ministry's efforts in this regard.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Does that include the ones that have been ripped out?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: These are on provincial rights-of-way. I believe the member is referring to the dialogue with the city of Toronto over the revised approach to the

bike lanes along Bloor, Avenue and Yonge. You might be familiar that there haven't been any bike lanes which have been removed or ripped out per that exercise as of this time.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: As of yet, right.

I love all the transit investment; it's great. I'd like it to be quicker than 15 years, but hopefully it will going forward. Just wondering about last mile and first mile and what your ministry is doing.

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: I appreciate the question. A couple of initiatives to highlight: You might have noticed the ministry's recent announcement around a rideshare pilot framework for the north, for Northlander communities that will be connected through the ONTC train that is about to be re-established in operations. That's an important first-mile/last-mile initiative. Currently, the ministry is undertaking very, very significant consultations to get advice around what should be in that rideshare pilot framework—which, again, the intention is to have that in place for the establishment of the Northlander train. That's one initiative.

I also point to the ministry's very strong efforts around the One Fare program, which of course is intended to support integration of public transit across the number of municipal systems that feed into GO, just as an example.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great. Anything pertaining to bike share around mobility hubs in urban centres or cycling infrastructure?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: The ministry, you might be aware, also has a number of pilots that take into account biking opportunities, but I might go back to my original response.

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

Chair, how much time?

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): You have just over two minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Susanna Laaksonen-Craig, you mentioned that the ministry is not beholden to any one energy source, essentially, and I just wondered what you're doing to invest in renewables, and also for conservation, education and awareness campaigns.

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: Thank you for that question. At the high level reflected in my opening remarks, we, for example, are right now in the middle of a long-term second procurement through IESO, and that is a procurement that is looking at both a mix of different renewable energy sources, as well as, then, it can be storage capacity. We had a very successful procurement for our storage earlier through IESO, so there are a number of different ways at how ministry and government are looking at ensuring that we have that diverse mix of electricity.

Through those competitive procurements, government is really looking at getting that affordable price, so that ratepayers can still continue to enjoy the affordable electricity while we have significant components of renewables, hydro and nuclear as part of that total mix, going forward.

As I noted, all these procurements are going to continue to drive—whether it's nuclear or renewables—the emissions on the electricity sector toward near zero by 2050.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Are you doing anything on—

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Sorry, we're out of time.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Now we move to the official opposition. MPP Bell, you have 20 minutes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you so much for coming in here today. Some of my questions are going to be fairly similar to the questions that were raised by the Liberal MPPs here.

The first thing I do want to say is that when I read the Auditor General's report on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, I read it with dismay and alarm. I read it with alarm because, based on all credible evidence, we're on track toward a future where our living standards are lower, our life expectancy is shorter, our economy is struggling and we are inundated with more frequent extreme weather events: extreme wildfires, extreme heat events, extreme flooding, heavy rain. I think that this is our reality whether we like it or not. That's what all the science is telling us.

I also think, as government and as ministry officials, we have a responsibility to do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare our government infrastructure, our economy, our social services, for extreme weather and a hotter climate. It's our responsibility. We're meant to think beyond two weeks. We're meant to think five years, 10 years, 50 years ahead.

When I read this report, it looks to me like the Conservatives have abandoned any pretense to insulate ourselves from climate change and its impact on our children and on future generations. It screams of this mentality of, "Let's take what we can get now and leave the future to burn."

I also think that we have a responsibility and a moral obligation—I can imagine, as public servants, you share this responsibility—to do what we can to ensure that future generations have a quality of life that's as good as ours. To do that I think it's pretty safe to say that we need to respond to climate change with everything we've got. That means reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and also preparing our infrastructure and our economy and our society—our health care systems, our emergency responses—for extreme weather. It's this thinking that is driving some of the questions that I have today.

The first questions that I have are around the GHG emission calculations. When I read this report, it became pretty clear to me that the calculations that the ministries have used to assess what the emissions reductions are going to be—which is, quite frankly, wrong—the AG concluded that the government did not use sound evidence to assess emissions reductions. They gave quite a few examples. The big ones included assuming the full impact of federal programs, even though they've been scrapped; double-counting emissions reductions; and assuming that GHG emissions reductions from the farming sector are going down, but providing no explanation on why that

assumption is justified. There were many examples throughout the report.

My question to you is, why did the ministry release a report that did not accurately assess GHG emissions reductions. What happened?

Mr. Alex Wood: I'm going to focus my answer based on an assumption that it is largely about a recommendation for, in the AG's report, having to do with how we conduct our analytical work, the tools that we use and the assumptions that we use. I want to distinguish here between what are essentially forecast versus reports that are backward-looking.

As the deputy mentioned in her introductory remarks, we, as a matter of practice over the last six, seven years, have used essentially the best model in Canada to determine and forecast emissions from a number of inputs, and there are two things to be said there. One is that exercise simulates some kind of certainty around what emissions will be in the future. But any kind of practical examination of that and experience with that kind of exercise shows that it is a far from perfect exercise to try to estimate what emissions are going to be like in five years, 10 years—

Ms. Jessica Bell: All right. I'm going to take back my time. Straight up, the examples I gave were examples that you would expect an undergraduate to get right. For instance, you have instances where reductions were double counted. That is pretty common sense when you're looking at doing an assessment of GHG emissions reductions.

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What I guess is that no effort was put into updating the plan, and it was just submitted to the Auditor General—that's what I sense—and that it reflects a real lack of care about action on climate. So I'm going to ask the question again: Why was a report submitted that had such, quite frankly, gross inaccuracies for assessing climate reductions and the policies that were going to be used to achieve those climate reductions? What happened?

Mr. Alex Wood: I can tell you, the exercise of engaging with the AG's office in terms of describing to them, working with them through the modelling platform that we have, explaining our use of assumptions—a very complicated math exists within those models. I would take issue with the idea that we were double-counting emissions because that is something that was identified in a previous AG report back in 2019, but that the ministry has taken great efforts at addressing through its modelling work ever since.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. So I have another question.

Mr. Alex Wood: Sure.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have many questions. I only get 40 minutes, so we will be following up with your ministry.

The second question I have—and in some ways this is more important. There were some errors in the calculating of greenhouse gas emissions. Can this ministry confirm that in the draft reports you have written or in future reports that you might release, you will make a commitment to ensure these kinds of mistakes do not happen again? And when I'm talking about mistakes, I'm talking

about factoring in the impact of a policy that has already been scrapped, or not engaging in double counting.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, just for a matter of clarification—I don't want to speak on behalf of the auditor, who I know is present here and would be happy to correct, but I think the auditor is being misquoted—not intentionally, member. But I think it's not unimportant to note here that the auditor recognized that the emissions were mainly due to policy changes that happened after those projections were calculated and developed. So I think it's not unimportant to talk about this as being also a connection back to sequencing. So recognizing your point, there was no deliberate effort on behalf of the ministry.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Just to clarify—I am taking back my time—my question is around what is this ministry going to do in the future to ensure that the plans that you release use accurate accounting? That's my question: looking forward. We're not going back now; we're looking forward.

Mr. Alex Wood: Right. I can categorically assert that we—as a matter of policy, as a matter of course, as a matter of practice—are in the business of constantly updating our model with the assumptions that come in to us. I will make the other point that many of those assumptions are not assumptions that we generate, as an example. We have to, in our model to forecast emissions in the province, have an estimate of what GDP growth is going to be in the province. We do not generate that GDP growth forecast; we rely on our colleagues in the Ministry of Finance to do so. There are any number of like assumptions that we use as a matter of course, and it is, again, a matter of practice in the ministry to update, on an annual basis, the model based on whatever new assumptions have come in. That includes any changes in policy, particularly federal policy.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So I recall in the Auditor General's report there is a draft report on calculated GHG emission reductions, 2025. Is that correct? There is a draft report—an internal draft report?

Mr. Alex Wood: Yes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Great. What is the projected emissions reduction in that internal draft report?

Mr. Alex Wood: I'll have to get back to you on that one—the exact number. Like I said, if we're talking about a forecast here, there will be a number attached to it, but it will almost certainly have been—if I were to run that model for you again, it would end up at a different number. These things are constantly changing, especially in the current, very uncertain environment that we exist in. But I can get back to you with that number.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. I appreciate that. My request is that that draft report is released publicly. Can your ministry release that draft report?

Mr. Alex Wood: I'll have to make sure that we're talking about the same thing.

Ms. Jessica Bell: We will definitely follow up.

Mr. Alex Wood: Maybe we can get some clarity on exactly the product that you're talking about.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Ten minutes remaining.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My second questions are focused on just the overall plan. What we have heard from the Auditor General's report and also from the presentations that you've given is that the government has made a decision to no longer have GHG emissions reductions targets post 2030, even though nearly every other province and territory has emissions reductions targets post 2030.

My question to you is this—and it's just straight up and it's already been asked but it's so important. This is probably the most important question that needs to be asked. Can this ministry develop and release a credible and accurate public plan to reduce GHG emissions to 30% below 2005 levels? Yes or no?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, thank you again for the question. As we've answered previously, the ministry is in a position with so many uncertainties that you're asking for something that we have only some ability to predict, and the prediction itself inherently leads to some inaccuracy. You've asked us both for a plan and a certainty of accuracy, which the ministry is not able to provide for you.

The presence of a plan is not the sole determinant of whether the minister and the government of Ontario continue to make commitments towards climate change reduction and decarbonization, which the government has remained committed to, and you've seen a number of investments throughout the other ministries. Our ministry acts as a partner only in this respect.

I think, maybe on an earlier point in your preamble, you talked about the importance of this, and I'd say that nothing is a better understanding of the importance of climate change than the evolution of how we do climate change planning in the government of Ontario. It's not exclusively the domain of the MECP. It's actually a responsibility of all our partner ministries, and adaptation and resiliency are inherent in all of the work that's done on a policy basis.

Ms. Jessica Bell: We'll get to that.

Help me out here. You agree that having a climate change plan is important, right?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, I appreciate this, but my view on whether or not there's a plan is outside of the scope of this discussion. The government is not committed to making a plan on climate change, respectful that that is a recommendation of the auditor but not a recommendation that the ministry is accepting.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So just to be clear, the government is not committed to making a plan to address climate change. The government is not committed to doing that.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: I'm not predicting what the future intention of the government is. It's causing me to speculate to do that, which is outside of my purview as a public servant. The government, at this time, has not asked for a climate change plan.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Well, that is a pity.

I want to talk a little bit about the consequences of inaction. Has your ministry—or ministries—done an assessment on the social and economic cost of not having

a comprehensive plan with clear greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets? Is there an internal assessment on the impact of not acting?

Mr. Alex Wood: What I'll point to in answer to that is the exercise undertaken by the province to create a Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment. That is a public document, a public plan, that was released two or three years ago now. It's the first of its kind in Ontario, describing what the expected impacts of climate change—physical impacts largely—would be in Ontario. That plan does exist and it is, in fact, public.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Going into the specifics of that, talking about the consequences of extreme heat events, has the ministry—or ministries—done any assessment on the economic and social impact of extreme heat events, and if so, what have you found?

Mr. Alex Wood: On that front, I would point to essentially the work that my ministry does to take the expertise that we represent in terms of understanding what those impacts will look like and then working with our partner ministries on the implications of those findings, of those conclusions—

Ms. Jessica Bell: So you've done that work internally?

Mr. Alex Wood: We are continuing to work with some of our ministry colleagues where that work exists in terms of—

Ms. Jessica Bell: And what have you found in terms of economic cost and social costs? What have you found so far?

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Mr. Alex Wood: I don't think we have hard conclusions, hard numbers that we could point to at this point.

Ms. Jessica Bell: All right. What we do know, though, is that heat events do and can cost a lot of money. To give you an example: The heat dome in BC was classified as the costliest disaster in BC's history. It resulted in 600 people dying, and the Canadian Climate Institute estimates the cost of not responding to this extreme heat event cost BC about \$12 billion a year. It's a lot of money. The reason I'm raising this is because there are economic consequences to not having a plan, and that's just one example.

Have you got any financial estimate on what it would cost if we had a similar heat dome event here in Ontario?

Mr. Alex Wood: Not to my knowledge.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. All right.

Now I want to get into the impact of climate change on infrastructure. Institutions have had a look at assessing the impact of climate change on public infrastructure. We're talking roads, the electricity grid, sewer systems, and whether they can withstand extreme heat and flooding, extreme rainfall, hurricanes and more. Assessments are showing that, quite frankly, we're not prepared, our infrastructure is not ready, and we should be spending money to upgrade our infrastructure and get our infrastructure ready for more extreme weather events.

My question is this: Have the ministries or government done any assessment on the impact of climate change on our infrastructure and the costs of upgrading our infrastructure or not upgrading our infrastructure when we're

looking at climate change? Have you done that kind of assessment?

Mr. Alex Wood: Our ministry has not, but the member opposite earlier mentioned some work by the Financial Accountability Officer and that exercise was looking at exactly that question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. Have your ministries done that assessment, though?

Mr. Alex Wood: We have not complemented that with our own work, no.

Ms. Jessica Bell: All right. It doesn't seem like this is very sensible long-term planning, especially when we're talking about the economy, if we're not preparing for inevitable extreme heat events and we're not preparing to improve and upgrade our infrastructure so it's ready for the inevitable flood, the inevitable extreme rain, the inevitable extreme events that we're going to have. It raises some concerns.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, to my earlier comment—I appreciate your comment, but I'll speak again to the fact that not all climate change planning is done by MECP. We're not an infrastructure ministry and much of that planning is done by our partner ministries who are our infrastructure leads, and so in segments—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. That's the reason why I said ministries and government. We'll make sure to follow up to see if there is some additional work being done by other ministries on not just reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also mitigating and adapting. So I can follow up on that.

I want to move to questions—

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Two minutes remaining.

Ms. Jessica Bell: This will be my final question related to whether the ministry or ministries or government have done any assessment on the impact of wildfire—the increased likelihood of extreme wildfire and the increased chances that it could affect urban environments similar to what happened in LA and recently in New York. Has your ministry—or ministries—done any assessment on the impact of extreme wildfire on Ontario—its economic cost, social costs.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: I appreciate the question, member. Again, my colleague from the Ministry of Natural Resources who's responsible for the wildfire management plan is not part of the panel today. I'm not able to speak on their behalf, but again, I wouldn't presume that my not having the information within MECP is a determinant that the government of Ontario has not undertaken that research.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. So we can follow up maybe with a recommendation around the need to have a climate change plan that addresses greenhouse gas emissions reductions and also some public clarity on how we are preparing Ontario for our future.

Overall, the assessment that I'm getting, asking you questions, is that there is a reluctance to share information that affects every single Ontarian around how we respond to climate change. I'm aware that there are specific poli-

cies that are being moved forward on transportation and on the energy grid, but there is a real need for Ontario's plan to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to be public, to be open to public consultation and to really be focused on excellence and accuracy, and I'm not seeing that today. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Okay, we're at time.

We now move to our government members. You have 20 minutes, beginning with MPP Dixon.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Having read the Auditor General's report, I'm trying to place their findings in the broader context that the entire government is working in. We have, obviously, challenging economic conditions. We have infrastructure growth and other sector realities. Also, I'm looking at what has been achieved and is being achieved in other provinces and territories across the country.

Can you talk a little bit more about how Ontario's emissions reductions to date compare to results across Canada?

Mr. Alex Wood: Yes. Thanks for the question.

As has been mentioned by the deputy earlier, Ontario has already made significant progress to reduce greenhouse gas emissions since 2005. Ontario's emissions reductions, 43.7 megatonnes, surpass those of any other province or territory. In addition, Ontario has the second-lowest emissions intensity of any province in Canada, with a 42% emission intensity decrease between those same dates of 2005 and 2023, the largest improvement of the five highest-emitting provinces. Then our per capita emissions, emissions per average person, have declined by 37% since 2005, ranking us the third-lowest among provinces, behind only Quebec and Prince Edward Island.

Putting that in the context of some economic comparators, while Ontario represents about 39% of Canada's population and GDP, its 2023 emissions account for only 23% of Canada's total emissions. To make that point even more salient, I think, Ontario is successfully growing its economy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, so this concept of decoupling what has been a growing GDP, which has grown 34% while greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 21.6%, is something to be pointed out. Just again, as a comparator, Canada's overall reductions during that same time period have been 8.5% of emissions reductions.

Just to tell a bit more of a story from a time-horizon perspective, despite a slight increase in 2023 from the ongoing economic rebound following COVID-19, Ontario ranks first in absolute emissions reductions, second in greenhouse gas emission intensity and third-lowest in per capita emissions in the country. These emissions reductions have been achieved through an approach that is responsive to the opportunities, challenges and circumstances of Ontario's economy and job creators.

Ontario has taken significant actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions moving forward and build an economy that is more resilient and self-reliant. Let me review some of those actions:

—establishing the Ontario Emissions Performance Standards Program and its associated funding program, the Emissions Performance Program, which provides incentives and supports to industrial facilities, making investments that lower their emissions and help make them more competitive;

—investing over \$24 billion in green bonds to help finance public transit initiatives, extreme weather-resistant infrastructure and energy-efficiency and conservation projects, and Ontario is currently the largest issuer of Canadian-dollar green bonds;

—making gasoline cleaner and reducing emissions by requiring fuel suppliers to gradually increase renewable content, such as ethanol, in regular gasoline to 15% by 2030;

—supporting the adoption and production of zero-emission vehicles to lower our transportation emissions and revolutionize our automotive sector while investing over \$180 million to support the installation of public electric vehicle chargers;

—undertaking the largest nuclear build-out on the continent while continuing to invest in energy-efficiency, electricity generation, storage and distribution to help Ontario achieve a more than 99% zero emission electricity by 2050;

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—developing a provincial carbon management framework that would accelerate the use of new technologies that reduce industry's carbon footprint, while supporting the growth of a strong carbon management sector in the province and opening the door to new export markets and attracting investments;

—launching a new round of the Hydrogen Innovation Fund, investing \$30 million to unlock hydrogen's potential to drive economic growth, create jobs and support the province's position as a leader in the clean energy economy. The Ontario government previously invested \$13.8 million in 13 projects through the Hydrogen Innovation Fund; and finally

—supporting both electricity and natural gas energy-efficiency programs to help families reduce GHG emissions. In January 2025 Ontario announced a 12-year energy-efficiency framework for new and expanded electricity energy-efficiency programs, with a total budget of \$10.9 billion.

Ontario is committed to long-term decarbonization, and the investments noted above are helping Ontario build a competitive low-carbon economy while protecting communities and the environment. Thank you for your question again.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): MPP Denault.

MPP Billy Denault: Just a quick question—well, I don't know if it will be quick—to the panel: If you can share some examples of ways that Ontario has encouraged decarbonization in the province's industrial sector by working with industry, not against them, both to protect jobs and the environment.

Mr. Alex Wood: Thanks again for the question. While Ontario's economy has grown, its emissions have

declined. From 2005 to 2023, Ontario's GDP grew by 34% while emissions fell by 21.6%, with Canada's overall reductions only at 8.5%.

Ontario remains a strong supporter of clean growth. Our investment in industrial decarbonization, such as clean steel and EV manufacturing, is creating opportunities for business and workers.

Actions to support decarbonization in this sector include the emissions performance standard and the associated Emissions Performance Program. This is a program that was created and received federal recognition in 2022. It is an alternative to the federal carbon pricing regime and it is tailored to minimize the burden on trade-exposed industries in the province and to be flexible to the unique needs and circumstances of industry in Ontario.

The EPS has been successfully giving industries an incentive to make reductions without driving away business and job creators. For example, Ontario's cement manufacturers have found ways to reduce emissions and improve their bottom lines in the process.

In the first two compliance years of the EPS—the emissions performance standard—approximately \$407 million in proceeds have been collected, which are being used to fund the Emissions Performance Program, which allows eligible industrial facilities to apply to use EPS proceeds paid by industry for projects that reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Part of that money also went to the Ministry of Energy and Mines' Future Clean Electricity Fund, which uses proceeds paid by the electricity sector to help reduce system costs for electricity ratepayers and to support the construction of new energy generation.

Funded projects under the Emissions Performance Program include energy-efficiency, electrification, waste water, energy recovery and waste heat recovery projects.

I'll also point to the work that's been going on in relation to the carbon management framework, which I just referenced earlier. Ontario is developing a provincial carbon management framework that will accelerate the use of new technologies and support the growth of a strong carbon management sector in the province. Development of this framework was announced in spring 2025 and builds on the government's efforts to enable geological carbon storage. It will open the door to new export markets and attract investment while reducing industry's carbon footprint.

Carbon management technologies are a cost-effective way to reduce hard-to-abate industrial process emissions. By harnessing CO₂, not only can emissions be effectively reduced but new economic pathways can be forged, fostering sustainable growth and driving Ontario's transition toward an innovative, clean and competitive economy.

You asked specifically about the steel sector as an industrial sector. We are working with the steel industry to help them cut their greenhouse gas emissions by supporting efforts to reduce and phase out the use of coal in their operation. Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie, working through the Northern Energy Advantage Program and through the Emissions Performance Program, which is

channelling investments back to them, is carrying out an \$888-million electric arc furnace transition program. That project by itself is expected to reduce emissions in the province by almost three megatonnes.

In 2022, another steel company, ArcelorMittal Dofasco, in Hamilton, Ontario, committed \$500 million in support of the ArcelorMittal Dofasco decarbonization project, which, in that case, would also replace coal-fed coke ovens and blast furnaces with lower-emission electric arc furnace technology.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Ten minutes remaining.

Mr. Alex Wood: In the interim, ArcelorMittal Dofasco has advised the Ontario government that the Hamilton project is delayed due to broader economic factors, including global market conditions and US tariff trade policies.

To date, no provincial money flowed to ArcelorMittal Dofasco for this project, but we continue to work with them to make this project a reality.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Recognizing that there's just about a brief minute left, I have a question: In recent years, we know that we've had a change in climate. Stormwater curves have had to be adjusted for frequency and intensity, and we need to prepare our communities for a changing climate.

I'm hoping you may be able to highlight some of the efforts that Ontario has made to build resilience in our communities.

Mr. Alex Wood: Thank you for the question.

So I referenced a little earlier on in one of my answers the work that the province undertook back in 2023 to release its Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment, and the undertaking there was designed to support evidence-based, climate risk-informed decisions by governments, by Indigenous communities, by municipalities and businesses in light of the findings of that report.

The Ontario government has also implemented a range of adaptational resilience initiatives that include conserving wetlands by investing approximately \$11 million in projects completed between 2023 and 2025 under the Wetlands Conservation Partner Program to support wetlands restoration and enhancement projects across the province to help protect communities from flooding, drought and other extreme weather.

The government has also funded core infrastructure projects that enable and maintain housing while promoting climate resilience and adaptation through the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, also investing \$7 million in the Evergreen Brick Works recovery and climate resilience project to protect one of Canada's first large-scale community environmental hubs and a top destination for residents and tourists in the heart of Toronto. That project showcases how climate-resilient infrastructure can help protect communities and keep residents safe from floods and other weather events, including stormwater green infrastructure.

The government has also invested \$15 million between 2022 and 2025 to support improvements to waste water and stormwater management systems in 18 Lake Ontario basin municipalities.

It has implemented commitments in the 2021 Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health. Specifically, annex 10 of that agreement is focused on building an understanding of climate change impacts on the Great Lakes and integrating this knowledge into adaptation strategies and management actions by communities in that region.

Further initiatives include:

- supporting Ontario farmers in adopting technologies and practices to reduce GHG emissions and make their lands more resilient to climate change through initiatives such as the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership and the Ontario Agri-Food Research Initiative—I believe Deputy Kelly mentioned those earlier;

- issuing \$24.6 billion in green bonds to help finance transit initiatives, extreme weather resistance infrastructure and energy efficiency and conservation projects;

- supporting the Port Lands flood protection project in Toronto through Ontario's sustainable bond programs, with \$400 million allocated to reducing flood risk by creating a naturalized mouth for the Don River in the Port Lands, constructing a new river valley and creating a flood-protected area;

- renewing the provincial hazard identification and risk assessment program to support emergency management partners to better understand hazards, emerging risks and resiliency opportunities to strengthen Ontario's emergency preparedness for an evolving risk landscape;

- enhancing emergency management capacity through sustained investments in provincial and community preparedness;

- establishing the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response;

- implementing the Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan;

- launching the Ontario Corps to support emergency response; and

- strengthened coordination between provincial and community emergency management through the Emergency Management Modernization Act.

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A couple of final points:

- requiring planning authorities to plan for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the impacts of a changing climate, as set out in the provincial planning statement 2024, which is Ontario's land use planning policy framework; and

- finally, implementing Ontario's Flooding Strategy, released in 2020, to better understand flood risks, strengthen long-term preparedness, enhance emergency readiness and guide investment in flood risk reduction.

MPP Mohamed Firin: How much time do we have left?

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): You have four minutes—just under five, actually, or about four and a half.

MPP Mohamed Firin: I would like to thank you all for the presentation today.

We're all concerned about keeping our energy supply affordable and reliable, while also reducing emissions. How is the government ensuring that Ontario's energy supply continues to be affordable, secure, reliable and clean to support the growth of our economy for the coming decades?

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: Thank you for that question. I have, in both my opening remarks and in my earlier responses, given some of that—but maybe pulling a number of those pieces together.

I will highlight Energy for Generations, a comprehensive, integrated plan—the very first one in Ontario which not only looks at the short term but looks at the long term over the next 25 years and how we can meet all those four words that you just mentioned: affordable, secure, reliable and clean energy. I think that one, right now, is on top of people's minds because we have done so much in that space.

We are taking the largest nuclear build-out on the continent, while continuing to invest in energy-efficiency, electricity generation, storage and distribution. Alex Wood, for example, mentioned the significant investments in energy-efficiency our government has done: \$10.9 billion over the next 12 years. All these different actions together will help Ontario achieve more than 99% zero-emissions electricity by 2050.

As we have talked about, and I referenced in my remarks, we already have one of the cleanest electricity grids in North America. As we continue to have the refurbished and new nuclear online, on the grid, and continue to go through these procurements for renewables, we are going to continue then—over time, as I said—to see those significant reductions and get to that near zero.

In Energy for Generations, it talks about the nuclear—all the refurbishments.

The Darlington refurbishment: That was just completed under budget, on time, which, in the world of nuclear, is almost, I would say, unprecedented. It doesn't happen often.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Under two minutes.

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: I had the opportunity to be in some meetings with the minister internationally, and it was recognized everywhere because it is so rare. Nuclear projects are famous for being much delayed and much over budget, so this is a unique one that we can be very, very proud of.

The Bruce refurbishments are continuing and tracking the same way.

And then OPG has started the construction of the first small modular reactor in Darlington, with units 2, 3 and 4 to come later.

As we continue to do this significant expansion—and I have only talked about, at this point, the generation side of things. But there is similar expansion, for example, that is

going to take place, of course, in the distribution. We will have to build a lot of wires to make sure that the energy gets to all those customers—whether they are residential customers, small business customers or large industry—at the time when the power is required. But in terms of supporting them, there is significant expansion of energy infrastructure.

The government has also been increasing supports for Indigenous communities to lead and partner on these energy opportunities. So a couple of examples of that: The province is tripling the total amount of loan guarantees through the Indigenous Opportunities Financing Program to \$3 billion, which will support Indigenous equity participation in energy projects. The province has also increased funding—

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Thank you. We're at time.

We will now begin the second and final round for the third party, beginning with MPP Fairclough.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I've got a couple of specific questions, and then I'm going to turn my attention to the work that's happening for beyond 2030.

My first question is: We're currently in a global gas and oil energy crisis now. With gas at over \$1.70 a litre, people need to save wherever they can. The Conservative government cancelled the EV rebate program and cancelled the home retrofit programs to help reduce home energy costs and reduce emissions. My questions are, how many people in Ontario benefit and what was the benefit of those programs? And can you explain why those decisions that were designed to save families money and reduce emissions were cancelled by this government?

Mr. Alex Wood: The cancellation of those programs dates back to 2018—at least the EV incentive program. I may ask my colleague from MTO to weigh in on the framework around that, but my recollection at the time was that was largely a function of an existing federal incentive and the government deciding that there didn't need to be a double incentive provided to individuals for the purchase of those.

It also, I think, speaks to a recognition that, at that time, in 2018—it may seem like fairly recently, but the marketplace at that time for those vehicles was largely a luxury market. Teslas and some of the German manufacturers were the very high-end vehicles, very high-cost vehicles, and the judgment there—again, at the time—was that these were incentives that were not necessarily incenting middle-income, low-income purchasers for those kinds of vehicles, which is the kind of policy that we would have wanted to support, instead of providing incentives to buyers who probably didn't need those incentives.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: It's a bit of a shame though, isn't it? Because I think we have now lagged quite a bit around the infrastructure that we need for EVs. We're seeing gas prices rise tremendously. Now, we've got new trade opportunities.

It's a bit of a shame. I feel like it pulled us back a little bit as a province, but I'd be curious as to your own view on the impact of that kind of change in policy—both for

families, but also for building our own infrastructure in the province.

Mr. Alex Wood: I mean, my own view would be that the infrastructure is quite a different question. I'll send it over to Tamara to speak to the investments that have been made in building out that charging infrastructure, because that commitment has continued and that investment has been made over the last little while.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Yes. Of course, we're lagging quite a bit though, still; there are a lot of gaps across this province in being able to rely on it today. Maybe there are plans to build it out?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Yes. I'm pleased to answer to round out my colleague's question in two important ways.

First, there are the investments that the Ministry of Transportation is making in the ChargeON program, which is really intended to address the specific need around charging infrastructure in the province. We're at over \$180 million in funding that program. The second round is rolling out now. Through the first round of the program, there were, I believe, over 1,000 ports and over 200 charging stations—probably the same number of which will roll out in the second round of the program. So really important strides in making and supporting the infrastructure that's needed to give people the confidence to move to EVs.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Okay. Great. Thank you.

My second question is really—climate change is impacting the affordability crisis. People in my community of Etobicoke and across this province are paying more for their home insurance, which impacts both homeowners and renters, and local property taxpayers are shouldering the costs of the extreme weather. People in Ontario are bearing the costs of climate change.

1510

Can you talk about what work is being done by your ministry today in this area? Have you looked at what those costs are for people in Ontario? Have you been making recommendations in this regard to the government?

Mr. Alex Wood: If you're speaking specifically about looking at insurance costs and what's been happening on the insurance side, the answer is no. We have not been looking at that. Again, as I answered in an earlier question, our role is largely to take the expertise that we have on essentially trying to forecast climate impacts over the coming decades and trying to build that into the policy-making, the decision-making that other ministries are carrying forward. But we are not regulators of the insurance industry, so we don't have specific work on that.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I will just say, it is something I hear regularly from my own constituents about. Flooding is a very serious issue in our area, and so I would think that the government would have some interest to think about how we tackle it.

But let's switch gears. I am interested in what work the ministry is doing to evaluate, consider and advise on approaches to reducing GHG emissions beyond 2030.

Mr. Alex Wood: As we were addressing in some of the earlier questions, the intent right now and the commitment

that the government has is to continue to work to achieve the 2030 target. As the deputy mentioned earlier, we have not been asked to develop a forward-looking plan beyond that date.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Okay, thank you. I do just want to ask a few resource questions, then. How many staff in your ministry or ministries are currently working on reducing GHG emissions?

Mr. Alex Wood: I can tell you that in my division, the one that happens to have "climate change" in the name, we're around 95 officials. But as the deputy has mentioned, and as some of the folks across the table have also, the reality is that climate change is now a much more distributed set of responsibilities across many different ministries. I'd be hard-pressed to come up with all of the OPS who have climate change in their mandate or responsibilities. That's not a number I have.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Yes, I guess it makes sense. I searched the budget document again this morning—from last year—and I think the word "climate change" is mentioned once in that, so it aligns with the fact this isn't a priority for the government.

Have there been any changes to your own personnel as a result of the change in legislation to remove Ontario's GHG emission targets?

Mr. Alex Wood: No.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: No.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Okay, so there haven't been changes, but we still aren't making firm commitments to where we're heading.

I guess I would just suggest that—I think it's incredibly important that governments are forward-looking. We are in 2026. We know what it takes to look ahead and look at what the interventions might need to be beyond 2030 and set ourselves up well in Ontario for that. I'm pretty disappointed to hear that the government doesn't seem to be interested, even, in looking beyond 2030 at this time.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, I appreciate the question in the spirit of how that is shared with us. I just want to capture, again, that the presence of there being a target is not the same as a commitment of the government of Ontario to continue working with climate change and to keep thinking about GHG reduction and decarbonization. The ministry is committed to this. A target is an expression of that, but not the only expression of that.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: But my question earlier was not about a target, actually. It was just about work that is being done to evaluate, consider and advise on approaches to reducing GHG emissions beyond 2030. That's just a long-term view of what we should be doing versus a plan that you're publishing or anything like that.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: I appreciate that. I think, then, that it would be a mistake to characterize what we've said as there not being any forward thinking, because in all of the policy work that there is, there are foundational efforts for government and thinking about how government moves forward and what that future is. The lifespan of those is going to be different based on policy and program, so there's no uniform answer to that particular question.

But the government is very forward-thinking in the work that we're doing, and that's the mandate of our ministry, to be thinking about that and to be thinking about the forecasting and future dates.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Okay. I've got one quick last question. Under Bill 60, the government removed the city of Toronto's ability to require green roofs. This long-standing policy has had an important impact on flood mitigation and urban heat. It was also a job driver, with over 1,600 jobs and growing in our province, including in my own riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I just wanted to ask, were you consulted on that policy change?

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Just over 10 minutes.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: I was just conferring with my colleague because that's not a lens that the Ministry of the Environment has reviewed and not a program the Ministry of the Environment has weighed in on. I'm not certain where that falls, if that would have been—

Ms. Lee Fairclough: It was under housing, but I would presume that they would actually ask for your expertise on that issue, to be honest.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Again, member, I think it's also because of the expertise that's been developed and the capacity that's been developed by ministries to do much of the planning, the policy advisement within their respective ministries and portfolios. Our ministry continues to be a partner in that, but we're not the exclusive holder of that information.

So not all policy direction is derived from my ministry. There's a considerable amount of policy work that's being done across the province that we are interested in but we're not necessarily directly informing.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Great.

I'll turn to my colleague now. Thanks.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. What I would say to the comment about not having targets is that what gets measured gets managed. We all know that.

I'm going to talk about waste. I'm obsessed with waste, specifically diversion. We know, in the audit, landfills emit 90% of waste-sector emissions and 4% of Ontario's total GHG emissions.

We know our landfills are reaching capacity, specifically Green Lane landfill, which, for those who don't know, is Toronto's landfill—Toronto being, of course, the largest city in Canada, so it's pretty important to know where Toronto's waste is going to go.

I'm just wondering what your ministry is doing to extend the life of Green Lane landfill. It's my understanding it runs out in 2034. It will be at capacity. What are the measures that your ministry is taking to extend that life?

Can we hold my time while we do a switch? Thank you.

Mr. Charles O'Hara: Do you need to swear me in?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Yes. I just need your name.

Mr. Charles O'Hara: Charles O'Hara.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Charles O'Hara, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you shall give to this committee touching

the subject of the present inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: I do, yes.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Thank you.

Mr. Charles O'Hara: So should I answer your question?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That would be terrific.

Mr. Charles O'Hara: Great, thanks

Green Lane landfill is a Toronto landfill, so it's their purview. It's not a provincial purview to manage that landfill. So you would have to talk to the city about what their plans are to extend the life of the landfill etc.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, I think we'll all be concerned about that. Do you know anything about what is shipped to Michigan right now?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: The waste that is shipped to Michigan?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes.

Mr. Charles O'Hara: I don't have the numbers in front of me right now, but there is a significant portion of IC&I, which we call commercial waste, shipped to Michigan in Ontario.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Is the ministry worried about that, given what's going on down south? If the border is closed, what would we do with that?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: I guess I would look to the deputy. I don't know if that's a question about greenhouse gas or if it's a question about waste diversion. I don't know if you want me to continue.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It kind of combines both because there's trucks involved, right?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: Yes.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Yes, member. Thank you for the question. These are emerging issues. This is more what we were speaking to earlier and the things that we can plan and the things that we can't plan. There are a number of considerations within the ministry, understanding what the impact would be if borders were closed and how we might be able to manage the waste that gets shipped outside of our border through the US channel and how we'd be able to manage that within Ontario. I'm not certain if you have a specific question—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Just if you have any forward thinking on plans for that, should that come to fruition.

1520

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Yes. Again, I'm mindful that as a public servant, I speak for what has been decided, what has been directed and what has been implemented. At this stage, I would say that there's nothing that I could offer by the way of a program, per se, Charles, unless there is something that I am—

Mr. Charles O'Hara: Thanks, deputy. The ministry is aware of waste going across the border. Those are private contracts to ship waste across the border. They're not provincial decisions.

The province has a number of programs on diversion of waste. There are the five extended producer responsibility regulations to divert batteries, electronics, hazardous special products, tires, blue box—all those are diversion programs.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Is the ministry planning any programming around deconstruction versus demolition, for legislation to put that into effect so that materials, instead of just being demolished, are reused in other construction sites? That would help with waste reduction.

Mr. Charles O'Hara: At this time, the government isn't consulting on anything to do with diversion in what we call the C&D sector, or the—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. So we'll go right to EPR, then. I'm thrilled with extended producer responsibility. I think it's the right move at the right time.

Even though it's coming from the government, I'm not sure of how happy or proud the government is. What was the communication from this government for Ontarians about the transition to EPR?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: There are five regulations. Is there one in particular that you're talking about?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The rollout.

Mr. Charles O'Hara: They've all had different start dates. The earliest was in 2018 for tires.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Was there communication to Ontarians about that from the province of Ontario?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: These are extended producer responsibilities. The regulation would have had press releases, announcements at the time about the regulation passing. Then it would have been for producers to decide how they were communicating their regulated obligation to Ontarians about collecting materials.

There's also, as I think you know, something called the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority that communicates through a website to the regulated parties about its obligations under the framework.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Was it the ministry's idea to roll out a new recycling system in January, the dead of the winter, after the holidays? Was that the ministry's decision to do that at that specific point in time?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: Again, these were all part of the decision of government to make a regulation. I think you're talking now about blue box.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, the EPR.

Mr. Charles O'Hara: The regulation was passed in 2021, and in that regulation was a transition schedule that said "when each community transitions." Not every community transitioned on January 1, and then the final transitions were on January 1, 2026.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So it was a government decision to roll it out for the city of Toronto on January 1, the dead of winter?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: Toronto actually transitioned—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I mean fully transitioned. I think we're splitting hairs.

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Chair, respectfully, I think at this juncture maybe I would ask the question whether or not this is covered under the scope of the review today of the auditor's comments.

The ministry is happy under different circumstances to come prepared for this line of questioning. But not inside the scope of the audit; we're not prepared to be able to provide the level of answers that the member is requiring of us at this time.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): In conferring with the Clerk, the member has time. The member has the right to ask questions. You have the right to answer or not answer them, or—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I guess the connection would be that we know that greenhouse gas emissions come from landfill sites. We know that extended producer responsibility is a waste diversion program. Presumably, the ministry, as I do, would like to ensure its success.

I feel it was not successfully rolled out, and it is your decision to go ahead with it. If it's something you're proud to do, why wouldn't you ensure a successful rollout? But I will skip that for now.

I'm just going to ask, why is the ministry delaying the targets for extended producer responsibility? Why is the ministry delaying the public space expansion of the system? And why is the government reducing the targets pertaining to certain materials?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, we're very pleased to answer specifically on the direction that the ministry has received, but you are asking us to speculate about what motives or policy considerations a minister who provides that direction to us may have taken and we're just not in a position to be able to provide a response to that question.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): One minute remaining.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Why did your bottle deposit return system working group dissolve?

Mr. Charles O'Hara: In 2023, the government had a working group to look at deposit return. After considering it, the government decided it wasn't going to proceed at that time because its priority was to focus on transition to EPR and not wanting to disrupt that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. I'm going to go over to balcony solar. That's what I was going to ask before. I've given up on waste. Are there any programs that you are establishing to develop a balcony solar system for people who wish to choose that?

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: Personally, I'm not aware of that specific—there are programs for solar and so on, but I'm not able to specifically speak if we are considering balcony. Happy to bring it back. We work very closely with IESO, as I was saying earlier—

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We're at time.

We now move to the second and final round for the official opposition, MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you once again for being here. This is a topic that I know many of us care a lot about.

Just to recap what we've discussed a little bit so far: It is clear that the Conservative government has no public

plan to reduce greenhouse gas emission targets post-2030, no public plan to have targets associated with that and no commitment to engage in any kind of public consultation for the public to assess whether the plan is credible or to provide feedback in order to improve it.

There is also the issue that I raised around the unsound evidence that was used to calculate greenhouse gas emissions reductions, although I heard that there is a commitment to move forward on best practices when it comes to assessing greenhouse gas emissions reductions and to improve on that.

I also heard frequent mention that the ministry is still committed to greenhouse gas emissions reductions and that there are specific policies and programs in place to achieve that, from transportation and food and energy. That's correct?

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: Correct.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Just to be clear, is the government still committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to 30% below 2005 levels by 2030? Is that still a stated commitment of the government?

Mr. Alex Wood: That target, as you know, is one that was expressed through the 2018 plan. That plan continues to exist. So, yes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So just to be clear, when you say yes, you are saying government is still committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030, that is correct?

Mr. Alex Wood: The government has said that the commitment is to continue to work toward that overall objective, taking into account, obviously, the situation that we find ourselves in from an economic perspective right now. As a very concrete example, I'll raise something that I—

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have a lot of questions. You've answered that question, thank you very much. Naturally, I am not rude, but in this circumstance, I have to be forthright, okay?

Just to be clear, you've got a commitment and there is a draft progress report that was done in 2025 to essentially—my guess is—assess your progress toward meeting that target. What is your progress toward meeting that target?

1530

Mr. Alex Wood: Our progress: We've mentioned some of the numbers that we are certain of, and we're going to get back into a discussion here about what is forecast and what is real. Essentially, we have real numbers showing reductions, showing progress of around 22% to that 30% target—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Correct, and 50% is because of the reduction or the decision by a previous government to eliminate—phase out of coal, right? Some 50% is from that?

Mr. Alex Wood: Well, we can get into a kind of tutorial on how—from what baseline we're measuring, we should probably take that offside since you want to stick to some of the questions—

Ms. Jessica Bell: I am quoting you.

Mr. Alex Wood: You are quoting me, yes, and I mentioned earlier that that 20- to 25-megatonne reduction from the coal closure is, in fact, baked into our baseline now. So what are we measuring from is the question.

Sorry. But you were asking about where we are—

Ms. Jessica Bell: What is your progress, I want to know, to meeting that reduction?

Mr. Alex Wood: The latest forecast that we've—not the forecast, sorry, but the actual NIR numbers that we have show us at a 22% reduction. I will make a point here, which is the NIR—our experience is that, every year, it changes. So whether our NIR will year by year show every year of progress verses one year being a little higher, one year being a lot lower, I would point to the need to wait for the latest in NIR for us to be able to speak conclusively about reductions that were achieved as of 2024 in fact, because there's a delay—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. I'm going to take back my time. I just want to make the request very clear. I would certainly like to see a clear plan for how the government is going to meet that target that is updated, that uses sound evidence and policies that are accurate as of now, so that I can go through public consultation, people can give feedback, assess its accuracy and provide additional comments. That is the request that I will make after.

I want to move to something a little bit more positive, and that is to focus on the solutions—and many of you have already reached solutions or identified solutions already.

I want to recognize Emily Hunter from Environmental Defence Canada, Anne Keary from CAPE and Louise Hidingier from Ontario Clean Air Alliance. I believe they're here in the room today. They are some of many stakeholders that have reached out to our political party, your political party and, I'm sure, the Conservative government to provide practical practices on what we can do in Ontario to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. So thank you for your work. I want to focus on that, moving forward.

My first line of questioning is around what can be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the building sector. Reading the Auditor General's report, it seems that some progress has been made in reducing emissions from buildings, commercial and residential, correct? Some progress has been made. There has been an increase in electric heat pump use, for example. One concern that we have, however, is that the government has made a decision to change its natural gas expansion program that requires existing homeowners to pay for developers to install natural gas hook-ups in new homes even when there might be some cheaper options available.

My question is, has your government done an assessment on the impact of the government policies around natural gas expansion on its greenhouse gas emissions reductions for building? Has there been some work done into that?

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: I will approach it this way.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's okay if it's a no. I'd like to just know if it's being done.

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: No, but the question has a couple of tentacles, and I will try to give you some things straightforward.

There are a lot of communities that are interested in natural gas, and so the government has a natural gas expansion program. It's a program that allows communities then to get access to natural gas because, in many cases, it is cost-effective, for example, for heating purposes and so on. As you mentioned, we are actually making great progress through heat pumps and various aspects of the Home Renovation Savings Program that incents those types of things.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Some progress? So help me out here: Has your ministry done an assessment of the impact of this new natural gas expansion program on its greenhouse gas emissions reductions for the building sector? Have you done that assessment?

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: No, because that's not quite how this ministry does our work.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So you haven't done it. Okay.

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: We look at it as a broader opportunity to create options for the consumers and allow them to make those choices themselves. But we don't work on the buildings themselves or building codes and things like that.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. I'll ask another question: Has the government or any ministry got a plan to reduce emissions from the building sector that includes targets and policies?

Mr. Alex Wood: Again, speaking to the role that the ministry plays and questions like that, we continue to be engaged with our colleagues from MMAH, who would be the ones putting in place policies, putting in place investments, working with communities, working on things like the building code itself and updates to the building code to promote greater energy-efficiency, for example. Our role is to provide them with advice and analysis and perspective on this. But insofar as the question is about whether there are plans to drill down into that, I can't speak to that definitively.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. When I look at where we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, going by the Auditor General's report, the big ones are the building sector, the transportation sector and the energy sector. Did your ministry bring anyone from municipal affairs and housing who could answer some of these questions around how we can reduce emissions from the building sector?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, we didn't bring anybody from that ministry, because they weren't invited by the Clerk of the Committee.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. So we can do a follow-up question, because I see value in there being a greenhouse gas emissions reductions plan that looks at the building sector.

I'm going to move on to some additional questions now.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Ten minutes remaining.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I do have questions about the transportation sector, and I believe—is it Tamara Gilbert? Thank you. I have a similar approach here. There are these sectors that are big emitters in greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and I think it's reasonable to assume that there would be a plan associated with each of these ministries to look at how we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, so that's going to be the focus of my questions.

When I look at the Auditor General's report, it looks like emissions from the transportation sector are increasing, especially when it comes to freight. Would that be an accurate assessment?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: I believe the intensity is reducing, though overall the emissions are going up.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Emissions are going up; correct.

And then, when I look at the Auditor General's report and the calculations that the ministry used, correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems like the government didn't factor in the gas tax cut—yes, it didn't factor in the gas tax cut when it was assessing its greenhouse gas emissions reductions predictions. Would that be correct?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Similar to Deputy Harrison's answer, there were changes which came into effect after. There was a sequencing issue around what was known while certain calculations were being made.

Ms. Jessica Bell: But it's safe to say that it wasn't included.

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: What was known at the time was included.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Right, but now it's in the 2025 draft report. The impact of the gas tax cut: Is it included in the emissions reductions plan?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Again, what was known at the time of the calculation of those numbers was factored in.

Ms. Jessica Bell: But now the government has a draft internal 2025 report assessing greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Do you include the gas tax cut in that assessment?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: I defer. I have nothing to build on my colleague's response when it comes to the 2025 report. Thank you.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay.

Mr. Alex Wood: I mentioned earlier that we would get that exercise to you. To be honest, my honest answer is that I do not remember when in 2025 that was undertaken, and, as you know, the carbon tax removal was three, four months into the year, and so whether that was factored into our analysis is something we'll need to look at.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay.

My question, then, around transportation is: Does the government or ministries have a plan—a clear plan—to reduce emissions from the transportation sector that includes policies and targets? If so, can that plan be made public?

1540

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: As covered in my opening remarks, the Ministry of Transportation has a number of initiatives under way which are intended to, for example, support mode shift and encourage people to choose public transportation, which we know has a very significant impact on GHG reductions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: There are some policy proposals that the ministry has to encourage mode shift, for example. There's also the plan to expand transportation or transit use. But is it all part of a plan that would include a target, and if so, can it be released?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Again, I defer to a similar response that my colleagues gave to that question at MECP. We absolutely have initiatives under way which will benefit GHG reduction.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Is it in a written plan that can be released publicly?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: They are part of, as you say, congestion-relief initiatives, public transit initiatives. Do they also fall under a targeted GHG reduction plan? No.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So there is no greenhouse gas emissions reductions plan for transportation. Would that be safe to say? There are initiatives, but there's no plan with a target.

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: I'm pleased to speak to all the initiatives we have under way, that's right.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. And there's no plan with a target? Is there a plan with a target?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: The initiatives do not roll up under what you are describing as a plan with a target, correct.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So there's initiatives, but no plan, correct?

Ms. Sarah Harrison: Member, you're likely to ask this question across the ministries, and what you're asking for is whether or not one lens has been applied across and aggregated up. I think what you're understanding is that the lens is applied on an initiative basis. While that would inform all of the policy decisions not only my ministry is making, but other ministries are making, it doesn't necessarily get expressed as an aggregated plan.

We have taken climate change and fully integrated it in all of our policy work. You will find policy considerations about climate change throughout all of the work that ministries are doing where it relates to GHG emissions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay.

I have something specific related to the transportation sector that has been raised by stakeholders, and that is the impact of electric vehicle subsidies in encouraging people to buy electric vehicles.

In Quebec, for instance, electric vehicles make up about 30% of new purchases, and part of that—not entirely—is because they have a robust electric vehicle subsidy program.

In Ontario, we have no electric vehicle subsidy program, and electric vehicles make up about 7% of new purchases.

Is the ministry exploring or looking at the value of bringing back, or bringing in, a robust electric vehicle rebate or subsidy program to encourage the purchase of electric vehicles?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: As I have communicated at this time, we have other efforts under way to support EV adoption.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So would that be a no?

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: The ministry is not, at this time, considering resuming any subsidy program.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. Thank you for that.

My next questions are focused on industry, and I believe—John Kelly, is that your area of expertise?

Mr. Alex Wood: I'm not John Kelly.

Ms. Jessica Bell: You're not John Kelly. You moved; you changed.

Mr. Alex Wood: Sorry. I did change on you, yes. Alex Wood is the name.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, sorry. I think John Kelly was sitting there first—

Mr. Alex Wood: He was.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay, that's why. I'm sorry. I wrote it down in my notes earlier. I apologize for that.

I want to talk a little bit about the emissions from industry. The Auditor General's report says that emissions from industry are rising, and that the government's GHG emissions reductions plan, quite frankly, will not reduce emissions as much as they say it will, as a result of how you've calculated GHG emissions reductions.

One of the issues that the Auditor General identified was that industry can now voluntarily leave the emissions pricing program—which I believe you're responsible for—because the federal government eliminated the federal consumer charge that was imposed on any company that was not part of the emissions pricing program. Essentially, the incentive for mid-size industry to stay in this pricing program has been taken away, so they're leaving. Would that be correct?

Mr. Alex Wood: A two-part answer: The first part of your assumption is correct. The additional part of it is that the federal government, under its own industrial regulation, created an opt-out provision, essentially, for industry between 25,000 and 50,000 tonnes.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Two minutes remaining.

Mr. Alex Wood: That is a provision that the government of Ontario chose to mirror, essentially, in our provisions, so that Ontario industry wouldn't face a situation where the provincial policy was more stringent than a federal policy applied across the country, putting our industry at a disadvantage. That opt-in provision exists now. Industry of between 25,000 tonnes and 50,000 tonnes can opt out of our program.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Help me understand here. So, because of these changes, how many companies that fit into this criterion are choosing to voluntarily leave the pricing program?

Mr. Alex Wood: I'm going to call a friend on this one.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I mean, a rough estimate.

Mr. Alex Wood: Tom, do you have a rough estimate? Okay.

We'll get that number to you as soon as we can, but we had, under that regulation, in the neighbourhood of 200 facilities covered under that. That number, of the 25,000 to 50,000 tonnes, is not an immaterial number under that total, but it wouldn't be the majority of them.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm running out of time.

The reason why I raised this is because reducing emissions from industry is incredibly important. It needs to be done well. The Auditor General recognized that there is value in the program that's being used by Ontario, but I think there's a lot of value in making sure it's done right and that we don't go back and we instead build upon our progress. So that was the thinking of my questions there.

I want to thank you for your time. Thank you very much for coming in. I wish there was a plan. I wish it was robust and meaningful. I wish it was public. This issue affects all of us—every single one of us. It affects our kids. People want a strong climate action plan. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We're at time.

We now move to the second and final round for the government members, beginning with MPP Darouze.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you very much for being here this afternoon.

On that note from the last question, I will ask what some of the additional actions are that Ontario is taking to position itself for success as the world transitions toward a low-carbon future, and I won't cut you off on that. You can take your time and explain to us in a broader picture what we're looking at and what we're doing towards that. Thank you.

Mr. Alex Wood: Thank you for the question. Ontario is taking a number of actions to position itself as a leader to support the growth of a clean economy. We continue to focus on achieving our climate change objectives while prioritizing needs arising out of the economic uncertainty facing the province.

Ontario is committed to long-term decarbonization, and our province will continue to evaluate and consider approaches to reducing greenhouse gases beyond 2030. The investments Ontario is making in its electricity system, in its transportation system and in industry are helping Ontario build a competitive low-carbon economy while protecting communities and the environment.

In terms of the specific, I will point to the fact that we are developing a carbon management framework. I mentioned this a little earlier. That framework would help accelerate the use of new technologies and support the growth of a strong carbon management sector. It would build on the government's efforts to enable geological carbon storage and would open the door to new export markets and attract investment while reducing industry's carbon footprint.

We are also supporting clean steel investment that will fundamentally reduce the environmental impact of clean

steelmaking and deliver low-carbon materials throughout Ontario's automotive and manufacturing supply chain and work to establish Ontario as a global player in steel production.

We are making gasoline cleaner and reducing emissions through the cleaner transportation fuels regulation, which requires fuel suppliers to gradually increase renewable content, such as ethanol, in regular gasoline to 15% by 2030. The regulation is expected to have an annual reduction of up to one megatonne of greenhouse gas emissions in 2030, the equivalent of taking 300,000 cars off the road. We are also supporting our clean fuels industry through domestic content requirements, ensuring that GHG reductions are achieved using made-in-Canada clean fuels.

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I already mentioned and discussed the Emissions Performance Program. We are returning, through the Emissions Performance Program, proceeds raised through the EPS Program that we have, to help sectors of the economy make transformational investments that lower their emissions and help make them more competitive. Funded projects included energy-efficiency, electrification, waste water energy recovery and waste heat recovery projects—and I mentioned projects like the Algoma project as well, as a recipient of our Emissions Performance Program.

Finally, I'll just mention the release of Ontario's first-ever Critical Minerals Strategy and the launch, in November 2022, of the Critical Minerals Innovation Fund. These initiatives are designed to help Ontario businesses thrive and tap into new and growing markets, securing Ontario's future and our place in the global supply chain.

I believe Deputy Laaksonen-Craig would like to add as well.

Ms. Susanna Laaksonen-Craig: Yes, I'm happy to speak to the electricity side and cover a little bit of the government's Energy for Generations plan and the very broad suite of actions there.

In chapter 1, it talks about energy-efficiency. We have talked about it. This is the largest investment in energy-efficiency programs in Canadian history. It was the \$10.9-billion investment over 12 years, as I mentioned. The framework is expected to reduce peak demand by 3,000 megawatts, which is the equivalent of taking three million homes off the grid, and save families and businesses \$12.2 billion.

While MPP Bell asked me about natural gas expansion, I would also, in this context, then, want to mention that the government is also supportive of ratepayer-funded natural gas demand side management programming, which is to reduce natural gas consumption. And for 2023-25, the natural gas demand side management plan had a total annual savings target of 352 million cubic metres of natural gas by the end of 2025, which, of course, then has corresponding GHG avoidance with it.

Chapter 2 of the plan speaks to affordable, secure, reliable and clean electricity. It speaks to the largest

competitive procurement in the province's history, the LT2, which will target an annual supply of up to 14 terawatt hours from new energy resources and up to 1,600 megawatts of new capacity resources that are able to enter commercial operation in 2034.

We talked about the refurbishments of our nuclear fleet, which will secure 12,000 megawatts of capacity at least for 30 years. And we have been talking about, to some extent, the new nuclear we are building, including the SMRs, but also looking at large-scale nuclear builds in Bruce and Wesleyville. Those would total 15,000 megawatts.

I mentioned that the plan also speaks to the transmission. The plan advanced the development of five transmission projects by identifying them as priority projects, which will add over 650 kilometres of new transmission lines and over 1,500 megawatts of new transmission capacity to Ontario's electricity grid.

The plan also highlighted Ontario's ongoing work with the Independent Electricity System Operator to develop a transmitter selection framework to continue to introduce competition to development and construction of transmission projects.

In terms of the future electricity grid, the plan advances a new distributed energy resource strategy that will leverage local technologies to give Ontarians more control over their energy use and make homes and businesses part of a more modern and efficient electricity system.

And the plan also highlights government's commitment to create resiliency, whether it's through the work of adoption of EVs and the network there, as Ms. Gilbert has spoken to, or those continued connections, improved connections for new businesses and homes.

There are a lot of other energy resources the plan also covers. We have mentioned the expanded Hydrogen Innovation Fund and the hydrogen interruptible rate pilot that are also continuing to drive down emissions.

In terms of looking at this, then, as not just an Ontario issue—because climate change doesn't know borders—we are working very closely with other provinces and territories. The plan championed new energy corridors from Western Canada and established principles looking at how we can work with our neighbours in terms of an electricity supply.

We have been talking a lot about plans. Specifically, the plan advances a series of reforms and enhancements to integrate and streamline planning processes to better support growth, whether it's through an enhanced regional and bulk system or other advancements and further work requested by the electricity system operator and the Ontario Energy Board.

The plan also speaks to the commitment to expand the Indigenous Energy Support Program, as well as—I earlier talked about government's commitment to be able to support the true participation of our Indigenous communities in energy progress.

There are many more, but these are some of the key tenets that are part of the plan that really maps out our energy future and is working to position Ontario's energy future around those four words that I have mentioned quite a few times at this point, but also how we continue, then, to be partners in Canada and work with our neighbours both in Canada and in the United States, when it's the right choice for us to make. Because that way, we can all really push these energy-efficiency, generation, transmission aspects forward.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We are at just over 10 minutes remaining. MPP Smith, please proceed.

Mr. David Smith: Thank you all for your presentation here this afternoon. Measuring Ontario's emissions is critical to understanding what happens within the province. We also recognize there is a fair amount of uncertainty in long-term projections, including technology demands and timeline. What is the government's approach to modelling greenhouse emissions?

Mr. Alex Wood: Thank you for the question. The question of modelling and the modelling framework that we use has been discussed already a bit, but I'll endeavour to get deeper into your question by providing a bit more information on that. We follow best practices and will continue to employ those best practices in our GHG emission projection analysis. As I mentioned earlier, we are committed to continuous improvement to ensure modelling remains robust. MECP continues to assess and refine the approaches, tools and processes used to develop GHG emissions projections as new information becomes available.

We, as a matter of business, have a subscription access—and the deputy mentioned this earlier—to basically Canada's leading energy environment model, run by an organization called Navius Research. It is a peer-reviewed energy economy macroeconomic model that is used by most governments across Canada, including Environment and Climate Change Canada, Natural Resources Canada, British Columbia and Alberta. It has also been commissioned by respected third-party institutions such as the Canadian Climate Institute, Clean Prosperity, the Public Policy Forum and Clean Energy Canada. Our teams continue to collaborate with Navius and to follow best practices to regularly update that model and to reflect the latest emissions data, economic trends and policy developments.

To get specific, we use the following approach to modelling updates: Most updates involve calibration of the model undertaken by Navius using publicly available data to reflect historical trends across all sectors of Ontario's economy. So in this case, we use the National Inventory Report, the National Energy Use Database and related reports, Statistics Canada's report on energy and supply and demand; macroeconomic projections; electricity sector data; and trends from the Independent Electricity System Operator, including energy supply and demand

and energy conservation management frameworks—all inputs that go into that basic framework that we use.

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At least annually, or as new policies are proposed, MECP collaborates with the leads on MECP initiatives to reflect updates to policies such as the Emissions Performance Standards Program, whenever amendments are made to that program; changes to the cleaner transportation fuels, which I've already mentioned; and then food and organic waste policy statement changes as well.

We also utilize annual federal consultation processes to track updates to relevant Ontario policies. These are exercises and reports issued by the federal government, such as the biennial transparency report, the emissions projections and the national inventory report, which I also mentioned.

Finally, policies and commitments announced in Ontario and in federal budgets, or updates to the federal emissions reduction plan itself, are reviewed for new developments on an ongoing basis. MECP collaborates with Navius, the model provider, to make any necessary policy updates.

We also attend regular federal webinars on new climate policies to stay abreast of policy understanding. If a policy is unclear, MECP would follow up with other ministries to clarify or rely on the expertise of the service provider.

Again, all of that to underline the work that goes into the model, that is itself the basis by which we generate and issue the emissions forecast, is an ongoing work in progress, constantly being calibrated, constantly being updated with up-to-date assumptions.

Thanks for your question.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): MPP Dixon.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Time check, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): You have five and a half minutes.

Ms. Jess Dixon: As we saw in the report, ultimately transportation is a significant source of emissions in the province, but for a lot of people, particularly those that are outside, basically, of urban areas, the reality for them is that driving isn't optional. Of course, also our freight and trucking industries are an important part of Ontario's economy.

Given that reality—and you know what driving looks like in Ontario—can we talk a little bit more about some of the efforts that are being made to reduce emissions in the transportation sector, just given the challenges that Ontario faces naturally?

Mr. Alex Wood: I'll start and then hand it over.

I'll speak specifically about a regulation that exists under our ministry, which is a cleaner transportation fuels regulation. What I can speak to there are changes that we already referenced to that regulation over the last few years. Basically, that regulation is expected to have an annual reduction of up to one megatonne of greenhouse gas emissions in 2030. That's basically by adjusting the blending requirement in that transportation fuel from 10%

to 15% over that time period and, from that single policy, a reduction of one megatonne.

We're also, as I mentioned earlier, looking at increasing the blending requirements in diesel fuels as well. That renewable content will need to emit 70% fewer greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel diesel on a life-cycle basis. Both gas and diesel are affected by that policy.

Finally, I mentioned this earlier as well, but just to underline that we've made recent changes to the cleaner transportation fuels regulation to require 75% of the current renewable content requirement for diesel fuels and 64% of the renewable content requirement for gasoline to be produced in Canada. So we are supporting not only the reduction of emissions through that particular regulation but also the economic development of that particular sector in Ontario and the rest of Canada.

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Thanks. I'm pleased to round out that answer and tell you more about initiatives the government is undertaking to support the adoption of zero-emission vehicles to lower transportation emissions and revolutionize the automotive sector.

First, on behalf of colleagues at the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and their Driving Prosperity auto plan, Ontario is committed to supporting investments that specifically support investments in the automotive sector. For example, there have recently been successful efforts to attract over \$46 billion in transformative investments from global automakers, part suppliers and manufacturers of EV batteries and battery materials. For example, in St. Thomas, Vianode has announced a \$3.2-billion investment to build North America's first large-scale, low-emission synthetic graphite facility, which will create 300 new jobs in its initial phase and strengthen Ontario's EV and critical mineral supply chain.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Two minutes remaining.

Ms. Tamara Gilbert: Also in St. Thomas, construction is under way at Volkswagen's PowerCo gigafactory, with major contracts awarded to Ontario-based firms. And in Windsor, NextStar Energy has begun production of its multi-billion dollar battery plant, which will employ over 2,500 people directly and anchor Ontario's EV battery supply chain. The facility began manufacturing energy storage system batteries in November of last year.

We've also already mentioned it a number of times, but the ministry is proud of its EV ChargeON program, which is investing over \$180 million to increase the number of public charging EV stations across the province, including at community hubs, Ontario highway rest areas, carpool parking lots and Ontario parks. The program will help reduce range anxiety, fill gaps in underserved areas and build a more affordable and connected charging network.

As I've mentioned, the EV ChargeON program reduces greenhouse gas emissions by expanding access to that network. By significantly increasing the number of chargers,

the EV ChargeON program really helps remove one of the key barriers to EV adoption, which is one of the most effective pathways to reducing emissions in the transportation sector.

Through round 1 of the program, the province approved over 270 projects that will add approximately 1,300 public charging ports across Ontario, and it is expected through round 2 that we will add a further 200 projects and another 1,000 ports, further strengthening province-wide charging availability.

Building on that success, stay tuned. The ministry will soon be announcing our intention to consult on a trans-

portation electrification strategy, which is intended to build off the momentum of recent federal announcements on a new auto sector strategy.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Thank you. We're at time.

That concludes the time for questions this afternoon. I'd like to thank all of you for appearing before our committee today.

We will now pause briefly as we go into closed session so that the committee may commence report writing.

The committee recessed at 1608 and later continued in closed session.

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