

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

P-8

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

P-8

**Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

2022 Annual Report,
Auditor General:

Ministry of Transportation

**Comité permanent des
comptes publics**

Rapport annuel 2022,
vérificatrice générale :

Ministère des Transports

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Monday 27 March 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Lundi 27 mars 2023

Chair: Tom Rakocevic
Clerk: Tanzima Khan

Président : Tom Rakocevic
Greffière : Tanzima Khan

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-4327

CONTENTS

Monday 27 March 2023

2022 Annual Report, Auditor General.....	P-71
Ministry of Transportation	P-71
Mr. Doug Jones	
Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness	
Mr. Jonathan Lebi	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Monday 27 March 2023

Lundi 27 mars 2023

The committee met at 1339 in room 151, following a closed session.

2022 ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

Consideration of value-for-money audit: highway planning and management.

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 value-for-money audit, highway planning and management, from the 2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General.

Joining us today are officials from the Ministry of Transportation. 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 and official opposition caucuses in 20-minute intervals, with some time for questioning allocated for the independent member.

Before you begin, the Clerk will administer the oath of witness or affirmation.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tanzima Khan): Good afternoon, everyone. So I will read out the affirmation, and if you could individually agree.

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. Doug Jones: I affirm.

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: I affirm.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: I affirm.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tanzima Khan): Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): I would invite you each to introduce yourselves for Hansard before you begin speaking. Thank you very much for being here. Please begin when you're ready.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Good afternoon. Thank you for having me. My name is Jonathan Lebi. I'm the assistant deputy minister of the integrated policy and planning division at the Ministry of Transportation.

Mr. Doug Jones: I'm Doug Jones, deputy minister for the Ministry of Transportation.

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: Good afternoon. I'm Jennifer Graham Harkness, and I'm the assistant deputy minister of transportation, infrastructure management division, and chief engineer, Ministry of Transportation.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Thank you. Please begin.

Mr. Doug Jones: Good afternoon, everyone. Bonjour, tout le monde. C'est un plaisir d'être ici avec vous aujourd'hui.

As I mentioned, my name is Doug Jones and it's my honour to serve as Ontario's Deputy Minister of Transportation. In addition to Jennifer Graham Harkness and Jonathan Lebi, I wanted to acknowledge an additional team member. Brenda Liegler is our acting director, special projects, for the ministry's transportation infrastructure management division.

Before I begin, I'd like to thank the Auditor General and her team for undertaking their comprehensive report and providing recommendations that will help improve MTO's robust highway planning and management processes. We're very appreciative of their work on this important file.

Our ministry has a strong tradition of continuous improvement, and we welcome this opportunity to find new ways to improve the vital work we do in service of the people of Ontario. I'm proud to be part of an organization that strives to be a world leader in moving people and goods safely, efficiently and sustainably. By building a stronger, safer transportation network through new and expanded roads, bridges, highways and public transit, our collaborative work ensures that Ontario's economy remains globally competitive today and for generations to come.

Transportation impacts the lives of every Ontarian. The province's roads, highways, bridges and public transit connect all of us to our homes, our jobs, to schools and hospitals. And with the province's population expected to grow by about 35% over the next 20 years, the case for building and expanding our transit and transportation networks has never been stronger. To put that number into perspective, it means that one million people will join us here in Ontario every five years—about 200,000 new arrivals every year—a resounding vote of confidence in the endless opportunities available in our province.

At MTO, our priority is to support the development of a world-class integrated transportation network that best serves the needs of the province's growing communities and businesses. To achieve our ambitious goals, we continue

to move forward with a historic expansion of transit and highway infrastructure, and every decision we make considers road safety and quality while ensuring we provide good value for Ontario taxpayers. The Auditor General even referenced the Statistics Canada finding that Ontario has some of the most well-maintained highways in Canada, ranking third after the Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan. The report also pointed out that the rate of traffic fatalities in Ontario is the lowest in Canada according to Transport Canada. Ontario ranks in the top five jurisdictions across North America for safety, and the top 10 globally.

The scope of the Auditor General's 2022 value-for-money audit of MTO's highway planning and management process was broad and included recommendations for primarily two divisions within our ministry. The first was the ministry's transportation infrastructure management division, responsible for delivering planning, engineering, construction and related program administration functions of the provincial highway network and other provincial transportation infrastructure. This team of public servants are the stewards of Ontario's roads, bridges and highways. Their work includes the oversight of over 40,000 kilometres of highways and approximately 3,200 bridges in the province. And through the transportation infrastructure management division, we invest billions of dollars annually to expand and improve the provincial highway network and connect people and places across Ontario.

Our ministry has committed \$3 billion in the 2022-23 fiscal year alone to expand and repair provincial highways, roads and bridges. This includes almost \$1.7 billion in construction funding in southern Ontario and nearly \$624 million in northern Ontario. The highways program outlines rehabilitation projects proposed over the following four years, and proposed expansion plans over the next decade. The 2022 program includes 600 highway capital projects, of which approximately 50% are in the north. We estimate these projects will create or sustain more than 4,200 direct and indirect construction jobs in northern Ontario alone.

In 2022, MTO advertised 109 major highway capital contracts, with an estimated value of \$1.4 billion. Forty-five of these projects were delivered in the north, valued at \$587 million, representing approximately 42% of the provincial contract value.

Some highlights of key expansion projects under way or recently completed include: In the greater Toronto area, we expanded and extended Highway 427 from Finch Avenue to Major Mackenzie; we widened more than 10 kilometres of Highway 400 from Major Mackenzie Drive in Vaughan to King Road; expanded Highway 401 with 18 kilometres of new lanes and investing in the rehabilitation and expansion of the Queen Elizabeth Way at Credit River; we opened a 14-kilometre expansion of Highway 69 in the French River area, which includes a newly widened highway and two new interchanges. The ministry also continues work to widen Highway 401 between Tilbury and London, including installation of concrete median barriers on the first 11 kilometres. We replaced four bridges at two different locations on Highway 417 in the Ottawa and National

Capital Region, using an innovative rapid lift technology that cuts traffic impacts down from up to three years to just a weekend, between 18 and 100 hours.

These highway infrastructure investments are estimated to create or sustain approximately 15,000 direct and indirect jobs and improve the quality of life for workers, families and businesses.

The second MTO division that was primarily mentioned as part of the Auditor General's recommendations was the integrated policy and planning division. This team is responsible for developing integrated transportation policies, plans and tools to meet the mobility and access needs for all people and businesses. Their expertise and vision are critical in delivering the safe, equitable, efficient, sustainable and convenient mobility options that Ontarians need.

The Auditor General's report provided 12 recommendations to help improve MTO's highway planning and management processes and included MTO's actions to address the recommendations. We worked hard on these commitments, and today I want to discuss some of the actions our ministry is taking to address the recommendations.

I'm pleased to say that nothing in the Auditor General's report was a surprise. It reinforced our belief that we are working on the right things. There had been ongoing work within the transportation plans to address the majority of the recommendations. Our team continues to work hard on our commitments.

Today, I want to discuss some of those actions. The first recommendation I would like to talk about is an implementation strategy for the regional transportation plans, which is consistent with the ministry's regional planning work already under way. Regional transportation plans represent a long-term vision to identify future transportation needs. The long-range plans set out the future needs of the entire system and provide guidance and direction not only for MTO but also for key network operators and infrastructure owners such as ministries, municipalities and service providers.

Over the past three years, we have released four regional transportation plans, one for southwestern Ontario, northern Ontario, the greater Golden Horseshoe area and one for eastern Ontario. These plans form the blueprint for future action in each region to expand highways and transit services, support growth, create economic opportunities and improve travel options. They also include hundreds of near-term actions to transform the region's transportation network.

For example, we have established regional task forces comprised of community-based leaders in southwestern and northern Ontario to examine ways to make travel easier for people and goods and boost each region's economic growth. Our transportation planning work also includes province-wide surveys to determine current needs, outlooks and opportunities for regional airports and marine ports.

All of this information feeds into our long-term planning studies. Technical studies have been completed for the greater Golden Horseshoe and northern Ontario regions. A

technical planning study in southwestern Ontario began in 2021, and one began in May 2022 for eastern Ontario. I'm pleased to report that the first phase of this work, which includes establishing goals and objectives and measures of effectiveness, is nearly complete. We are targeting completion of these studies as early as the spring of 2024.

Together, our regional plans and long-range technical planning studies form our ministry's single long-term vision for Ontario's transportation network that takes a coordinated approach to address the unique needs in every corner of the province.

The Auditor General's second recommendation called for our ministry to improve the travel demand forecasting data model validation process. We agree with this recommendation and are already taking steps to address both action items identified by the Auditor General. Our ministry understands the importance of having the right tools, expertise and resources to support its transportation planning work, and that starts with validated travel demand forecasting models. That's why we leverage industry expertise, including academia, that we don't have in-house in MTO.

This work ensures the adoption of best practices in model development, which includes calibrating and validating these models. For example, when updating a travel demand forecasting model, MTO staff work closely with our specialist consultant to oversee model development, validation and delivery.

1350

MTO staff also continue to work with independent subject-matter experts on an upcoming update to the ministry's model for the greater Golden Horseshoe, which is expected to occur in late 2023. We're also considering hiring a second independent subject-matter expert for the next cycle of model redevelopment, which will start in 2025. Using external consultants to develop these models leverages the industry's expertise in allowing our staff to work closely with a consultant to oversee the model development, validation and delivery.

The next topic I want to discuss is the report's third recommendation, regarding the decision-making process when selecting highway expansion projects. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that our ministry has robust processes for identifying and prioritizing rehabilitation and expansion projects. For rehabilitation projects, considerations include the existing pavement condition of roads, highways and bridges, as well as safety concerns, which play a crucial role.

Our ministry's well-established expansion priority framework considers several criteria, including travel time delay changes, collision frequency, economic activity, alternative route options, other goods movement transportation modes, the value of the goods movement, and aligning with planning priorities such as municipal plans and support for the use of transit. This framework generates a score to bucket the relative priority of expansion projects into low, medium and high importance.

The expansion prioritization framework is only one factor used by MTO to develop options for prioritizing projects. Other factors include project readiness, including

environmental assessments and consultations with stakeholders; available funding; ministry and industry capacity; and the timing of other projects nearby.

Even when a project is identified to be delivered in a particular year, it doesn't mean it has to happen that year. We build flexibility into the prioritization of rehabilitation and expansion programs to account for changes. Additionally, we now have the transportation plans that I previously mentioned to guide our work, and, as highlighted in the Auditor General's report, our ministry also ensures our priorities and mandates align with the government.

This consideration will always be part of the decision-making process, regardless of the governing party, since the government makes commitments to the public and is elected accordingly. Ontario's public service provides options to the government, but the province's elected officials, who have been mandated to govern by the public, will always decide which projects move forward and when. During the 2018 and 2022 election campaigns, the government was very clear about its intention to build new highways and advance a number of transportation projects. The prioritization of our ministry's projects aligns with these identified priorities.

In her report, the Auditor General raises concerns about our ministry's road condition assessment process, and recommends the increased use of automatic road analyzers to improve the effectiveness of highway condition assessments. Our ministry is currently reviewing the benefits of both automated and manual assessments of highway pavement conditions to our decision-making process, as well as an appropriate balance of automated versus manual assessments, as they complement each other.

Following the recommendation of the Auditor General's report, the ministry will develop a formal policy that sets out expectations for using automated road analyzers and collecting data. This policy will include a protocol for internal review, to ensure consistency and quality of pavement reports, and we expect it will be completed by mid-this-year.

MTO is a leading highway agency in the use of automated road analyzers. These vehicles include laser scanners and video equipment attached to a specialty vehicle that automatically collects pavement condition data to an onboard system while travelling at posted speeds. We use this equipment to make decisions regarding pavement conditions and determine the most appropriate and cost-effective remediation treatments. As part of this process, we can scan and assess the condition of the province's highways at least once every two years. Each year, our ministry collects over 25 terabytes of data across its 40,000-kilometre network to monitor the condition of the provincial pavements year over year.

But to supplement this road analyzer data, the ministry needs manual pavement assessments to be performed consistently, according to our pavement condition rating manuals. The road analyzers are operated to assess one lane on a two-lane highway, and one lane in each direction on multi-lane and 400-series highways. If we need to know the condition of multiple lanes, manual pavement assessments are completed to supplement the road analyzers.

As an example, if we have a multi-lane highway, a road analyzer is going down a road and it determines that there's a failure or an area that needs rehabilitation. It doesn't actually identify what the root cause is. If you had a culvert failure, or your water course on the side, the manual assessment would then identify what work had to be done. If you didn't do that, you would just repair it and then a year later you could come back at it again. The automated assessment and manual assessment go hand in hand.

We remain committed to using the data when we make decisions regarding network pavement condition and determining the most appropriate and cost-effective remediation treatments.

The next recommendation the Auditor General provided that I would like to discuss relates to the effectiveness of our ministry's existing key performance indicators and the need to implement new ones. Currently, our ministry uses key performance indicators to oversee highway planning and management activities, including percentage of highway pavements in good condition, bridges in good condition, fatality rates and the average travel speed of commercial vehicles on 400-series highways. These metrics are used by many jurisdictions and provide an opportunity for MTO to measure and compare our performance.

We are focusing on KPIs that are meaningful, measurable, repeatable, achievable and that help with decision-making processes. Based on the Auditor General's recommendations, we're advancing a review of existing KPIs and considering additional KPIs to measure and publicly report, which will include a review of KPIs used in other jurisdictions. We anticipate this work will be completed by the end of 2024.

The next recommendation I would like to discuss is the business cases that were prepared for removing tolls on Highways 412 and 418 and removing licence plate stickers. The Auditor General reviewed these business cases and determined they were not promptly provided to the Treasury Board and Management Board of Cabinet and did not include all the information the board requires to make a decision, such as an analysis of the status quo. At MTO, we recognize the concerns raised by the Auditor General, and I can assure the members here today that there was a lot of work done by staff to prepare business cases and provide briefings in advance of submitting cases to provide awareness of the timing and content. We acknowledge the AG's recommendation, and moving forward, we commit to continuing to include appropriate information in business cases to support decision-making, with sufficient time for review.

The Auditor General's report also highlights that our ministry needs to make the most effective use of its asset management system. The ministry's current asset management system captures pavements, bridges and structural culverts. The ministry is focused on automating asset management processes for pavements and bridges as they represent about 90% of our network, estimated at \$85 billion in replacement value.

Once we've completed those assessments, we'll move on to lower-value assessments. This approach balances effective management with efficient use of resources, but

we understand that there's a need to capture other assets beyond pavement and bridges. I'm pleased to note the ministry had already identified the need for a new system, and work is under way to develop terms for the procurement. That's why we're in the process of procuring a new transportation asset management system that will have the capabilities to incorporate information from other highway assets. These include traffic signals and patrol yards. The ministry expects to procure the new system by fall of 2023 and integrate different assets once they're deployed gradually.

In her report, the Auditor General also recommends improvements to the ministry's contract management system to allow our team to manage its contracts more effectively. Currently, most of the ministry's construction contracts, including change orders, claims and project delays, are recorded in the current web-based contract management service. This is another area where the ministry has already identified the need for a new system and developed the new requirements for reporting and analytics. I'm pleased to say the construction module of the contract management system was launched February 2023, thanks to the hard work of ministry staff.

Previously planned updates to the current system were intended to include engineering assignments and alternate delivery contracts. While these contract types were not managed in the current system, the information on change orders, claims and project delays for these contract types is considered very important and is documented and tracked outside the system. The new system will include all these contract types, with the engineering and alternate delivery phase to be implemented this coming summer. The development of the construction contract module in this new system includes enhancements identified from experience using the ministry's prior systems. The system will also include engineering service provider assignments.

Our ministry continues to take actions, both small and large, as we demonstrate our commitment to improving Ontario's transportation network. I'm confident that no matter the challenge, the Ministry of Transportation will always push itself to deliver the best possible service to Ontarians. That's because we understand that people and businesses rely on our ministry's work every day. They rely on us to build the transit they need to get them where they need to go faster. They rely on us to keep the roads, bridges and highways that connect Ontario's communities safe. They rely on us to maintain and expand our provincial highway network to keep Ontario's people and goods moving while keeping our economy growing and competitive. And they expect us to innovate and find creative and sustainable solutions that lay the foundation for our collective success.

I look forward to discussing how we can embrace the challenges that lie before the ministry and work toward a bright future. Together, we will build a world-class transportation network that best serves the needs of the people of Ontario for generations to come.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocvic): Thank you, Deputy Minister.

This week, we will be proceeding in the following rotation: We begin with the official opposition for 20 minutes, followed by the government for 20 minutes and then the independent member for three minutes. We'll follow rotation for five rounds.

1400

As this committee is now authorized to meet until midnight if necessary, at 3:30 I will check in with members to see if additional rounds of questions will be necessary. Following the second round, we will take a short recess for those, in case, who need it.

Let's begin with the official opposition.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Just a point of order, Mr. Chair. There is an expected vote sometime around 3:15 p.m. that we may have to adjourn for.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Okay—but we would recess for that.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Okay. I'll start with a few general questions first. When you're talking about the statistics about accidents on the highway, do you ever break them down beyond—so, for example, northwestern Ontario right now is having a lot of fatalities due to trucking accidents and people who live in the region feel that it's become very, very dangerous. I know that it's partly outside the scope of this discussion, but when I see the statistics, I think, "Well, that's not what we're seeing where I live."

So I just wonder if that's ever been broken down in terms of location, time of year and so on?

Mr. Doug Jones: Yes, we certainly do have those statistics. I don't have them available with me today, but they are available.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Okay. I wanted to look at the tolls question about the 412 and the 418. I believe the cost was initially \$1.3 billion for those highways, but the toll operations were meant to recover quite a lot of that money: \$850 million over 30 years. But once the tolls were cut, only about 5% had been recovered. So I'm wondering where the revenue—like, how what's missing now has been budgeted for?

Mr. Doug Jones: Through the Chair to you, thank you for the question. When we look at any activities such as that, we look at the options that are available and assess the risk. But something that relates to revenue, it's more over to the Ministry of Finance to determine what happens with revenues overall. So I'd have to direct that question to somebody within the finance committee.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Right, okay. I have a question about northern Ontario plans and there being a planning group. Again, I'm wondering, because northern Ontario is vast—there's northeastern, there's northwestern, there's the Far North. And so I'm wondering, if there's a single committee that's looking at those problems, how that's actually working and how all that coverage is being examined?

Mr. Doug Jones: We have a comprehensive consultation process, but I might turn to my colleague—

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: To Jonathan.

Mr. Doug Jones: —or, I'm sorry, to Jonathan with the details on the task force.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Thank you for the question. We undertake a comprehensive consultation and engagements, including sessions with local municipalities, Indigenous communities and stakeholder groups, to inform. And then the ministry also has an ongoing task force that supports that as well, with representation, given the vastness of the north, from northwest, northeast and also Indigenous communities, as well as stakeholders.

As you said, MPP, to really capture the fact that the north is vast—and one regional plan has to cover completely different types of not just geographies but needs as well. Also, given the balance between larger municipalities that have a preponderance of the population, but also Far North communities as well, so exactly that, trying to be sensitive to that. That's also why it's not a one-time opportunity. There's not just the plan that came out, as you noted, but ongoing work to evaluate and also to identify other iterations as well.

I hope that helps address your question.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: It helps a little bit. I'm just wondering, is the membership of those committees public with the location of the people and so on and when does it change up? I believe there's a report coming out May 8—

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: There is a report coming out in May. I'll just, if you'll indulge me, give you some of the sample membership of the task force if that's helpful to you. It's co-chaired by councillor Danny Whalen from FONOM and, of course, Temiskaming Shores. Mayor Wendy Landry is the co-chair from NOMA. Brian Bigger from Sudbury is on it. Daniel Reynard, the former mayor of Kenora—who actually resigned but he was earlier on it, as well, since he was the former mayor. There's the mayor of Kapuskasing; the mayor of Sioux Lookout; the mayor of Val Rita-Harty and president of the NorthEastern Ontario Municipal Association as well. Ogichidaa Francis Kavanaugh from Grand Council Treaty 3 is represented; Chief Melvin Hardy from the Northern Superior Regional Deputy Grand Chief of the Anishinabek Nation, as well as Grand Chief Derek Fox from the Nishnawbe Aski Nation for Indigenous representation. Kevin Eshkawkogan from Indigenous Tourism Ontario is on there. Al Spacek, chair of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission is represented; Charles Cirtwill from the Northern Policy Institute; and there's some representation, including Ron Bumstead, from trucking, Bumstead Trucking.

That's the broad breadth of the committee and the task force that supports and feeds into the reports that feed into the ongoing work.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Shall I keep going?

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I can go if you want.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Go ahead.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for coming. Before I start, I'd just like to say, when I deal with the Ministry of Transportation in the northeast, although I

don't always agree with them, they're very good to deal with. I'd like to put that on the record, because—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No. I don't always agree, but they always get back to us and they're good to work with. I'd like you to know that.

I have my own measuring system from Queen's Park to New Liskeard: I drive it weekly. When I was coming home last week, at the Temagami service yard, the flags were at half-mast, because last weekend another snowplow operator was killed. I'd just like the committee to think about that. I believe there were close to 300 serious snowplow accidents in the last few years—not all fatalities, but very serious.

I drive here a lot too, but the conditions in parts of northern Ontario on Highway 11—and I commend the government for the 12 hour. We've been pushing for a long time to get that moved up, and 12 isn't eight, but it's better than 16.

I was interested in how ratings are created for new highway projects, not just on loss of life. You can't put a price on loss of life. But each time Highway 11 is closed, there are miles of transports sitting there—and they're not local cars. That is the commerce that crosses Canada, and it sits there and sits there. The highway was closed again this weekend.

I'm not disputing that the highway needs to be closed. And there's no detour. For a big part of the Trans-Canada Highway, there is no detour. So if you're a truck and you're carrying some precious semiconductors or whatever you're carrying, you're stuck there.

I would like to know, is there a way to calculate that in the cost of having a two-lane highway with no detours as the connecting link between the east and west of this country? It is not the 401 up there.

Why we get so emotional about it—I'm going to do a member's statement on Tuesday—tomorrow. Tomorrow is the funeral for one of our local pharmacists who was killed this weekend on that highway going home, in a transport accident. It's our main street as well.

When I hear the stats that we've got the safest highways in North America—I'm not disputing that; I'm sure they are. But people up home, we cringe when we hear that, and I'm sure you do too.

What's the calculation? How many millions of dollars do we have to lose—and I'm almost being as cold as the Conservatives. I mean that in a good way. How many millions of dollars do we—how do you calculate that? Does that fit in your calculations on how a project is rated?

1410

Mr. Doug Jones: Thank you for your question. We do include a broad view of economic analysis and safety etc. But let me say that in my previous role before I joined the Ontario public service, I was in charge of occupational health and safety and also investigation of workplace fatalities. So safety is front and foremost in my mind at all times, and to continue to get better, because any serious accident, any fatality is one too many. Our target is to always have zero, and how do we get there.

I'm pleased that we've made some investments. We've announced some. We've got the first two-plus-one highway option coming in northern Ontario, and that is to help alleviate some of the current concerns that you raised, to provide passing opportunities and improve safety in certain areas. Just in the last few months, what we also did to help drivers who might be caught in a road that might be closed by an accident or closed by the OPP because of weather conditions or the road conditions is we've installed variable messaging signs at key points. So we say that the highway at such-and-such a point is closed, and they don't get into a stretch of road where there's no off-ramp for 30 or 40 kilometres or more, and they can bunker down in a town that has the services they need for some time. We're hoping that is helpful. We also, as you mentioned, put in the change in the highway winter maintenance targets to get them cleared in 12 hours.

Some of the challenges we have is that the conditions are very different in the north and south. I lived in Timmins, in the New Liskeard area for a while. I also spent three years in Winnipeg, and also worked in Edmonton in charge of public works and looking after road maintenance and winter maintenance there. To be honest with you, we have a certain number of tools in our tool box that we can use for winter maintenance clearance. Some of it is just the equipment that we use, snowplows and everything, but a lot of it depends on some of the chemicals that are available. In southern Ontario, around the Toronto area or St. Catharines or Windsor, you're not going to get temperatures that are below minus 8 or minus 10, so regular road salt works very well. You can put it on there and then the volume of traffic that goes by clears the roads quite quickly, and you can apply some of these products or chemicals in advance of a storm to make clearing of that highway very easy.

Once you get to a point where you're about minus 25 to minus 30—there are a variety of other chemicals you can use as the temperature gets colder, but once you hit that minus-25 to minus-28 mark, they don't work at all. There's no point in putting it down because it just won't work, and then the traffic that goes over it can start building up on the road, so it takes much more effort to scrape that road and to make it clear. So although we strive for bare pavement conditions as soon as possible, sometimes we are at the mercy of the weather. It could be lake-effect snow coming off the lakes. It could just be that the extreme cold conditions don't allow the chemicals to work and you have to wait for a change. But our objective is always to get that pavement bare as soon as possible, because that is the safest road surface to operate on, and that's what we're committed to doing.

As we continue to invest in the highways, we'll have more opportunities, I would hope, to put in two-plus-ones. And we're twinning the highway between Kenora and the Manitoba border, which is needed, so I think that's a good direction for the future.

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate that answer. It is very different managing the roads when they're cold. I talk to our local contractors a lot. We are not in favour of some of

the ways the contracts are put out, but the contractors do everything they can with the resources they're given.

I think that something the committee needs to know too: One of those signs is in North Bay. The highway is closed in Temagami and the sign is in North Bay, but Temagami is an hour from North Bay. So when the highway is closed, everything in that hour past that sign is stopped. There is, in many cases, nowhere to park. No one is going to come and see how you're doing, except the volunteer maybe. And this is the Trans-Canada Highway. This is how we deliver our goods. Okay, it's my main street, but it's the Trans-Canada Highway, and sometimes people are stuck on there for hours and hours and hours.

The local Legion opens up for the drivers and they go out with snow machines or four-wheelers. But the government doesn't do this; volunteers do this, and I'm not sure that we really appreciate that. I know the MTO does. I'm not blaming the MTO for this. I just want the committee to know—and you know, because you've lived there. I want the committee to know that it's not the same, but people think it's the same. So when those cross-Canada carriers come up Thibeault Hill, they think it's the same. You go up Thibeault Hill, and it's no longer the same. It's a whole different world.

The two-plus-one—hopefully both the pilot projects, but I'm assuming one: If it works, and it works in Scandinavian countries, I hope that it's not a pilot that we have for 10 years, because there's a lot more to it than just that section. I know I'm making more of a statement than a question, but I would be remiss if I didn't, on behalf of all the people who drive on that highway on a daily basis—I don't know a person who hasn't had a white-knuckle incident, who hasn't been pushed off the road by a transport. Right? Every time we hear about a fatality, we think, "By the grace of God, that could be our kid." I know you know. I just want everyone to know that that is the Trans-Canada Highway, which all our goods travel—and in the winter-time almost all of them go, because nobody wants to go on the 17 in the winter, because they really have bad weather.

Anyway, getting back to questions: One of the complaints we have a lot on our part of the Trans-Canada is a lack of parking for transports, because every once in a while there's a snowplow turned around and there are always transports parked in every little gas station. They're far apart, but every time I stop for gas I get complaints because there are transports parked in the yard. Are rest areas—because something else that's not up north is that ONroutes don't exist. There is no ONroute. Where are we with actually having rest areas where truckers can actually know they're going to have a spot, and know that they can get off the highway?

Mr. Doug Jones: Thank you for the question. Through the Chair to MPP Vanthof: The rest areas are critically important. We recognize that, and as we build our expansion program, where we're looking at the right opportunities to build those on new highways, on existing roads, we also have plans there. I'll turn it over to my colleague Jennifer just to explain the details.

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: Thank you. Yes, we do have plans for increasing rest areas. We have a number

of sites. There are some in the south, but the majority are in the north. We have two new sites, and we have eight major rehabilitations of rest areas—

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

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: Pardon?

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

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: Oh, thank you—eight major rehabilitations that have taken place. That includes, again—in the south, we have Gananoque, but we have Argon Park at the Ontario/Manitoba border, Ryland, Leonard Lake, Lodge Lake, Klotz Lake and Manitouwadge. We also have a five-year plan to improve the rest area network with 10 new sites and the rehabilitation of 14 new rest area sites.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for that. I can't stress enough how important it is, because we did a tour once of some of the trucking companies in Brampton, and a lot of the people driving those trucks are as afraid of Highway 11 north as we are afraid of them, because of lack of places to park, lack of shoulders. Because we see lots of crazy kinds of accidents, but once you pull a transport off the highway, and the shoulder is not very—if you're not on something hard, you're not getting back on the highway. It happens all the time. But if they knew there was a place to park every so many, it would make a huge difference.

1420

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): All right. We're going to move to the government side. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, gentlemen and ladies, for your presentation this afternoon. I'm from the Hamilton area, and we have the busiest cargo airport in the country. It currently sits on a road that is a two-lane road, basically a farm road. I'd like to see it widened. We've put in a proposal to have it widened.

How do you go about determining which roads the ministry will look at when it comes to widening certain roads, adding lanes or even creating/building roads? What is the criteria involved behind those decisions?

Mr. Doug Jones: Thank you for the question. Thankfully, we do have our transportation plan that we developed for all areas of the province, including the greater Golden Horseshoe area that covers the Hamilton area. We're also incorporating the supply chain modes such as the Hamilton airport, also the marine or port facilities that are around.

So I think what I'll do, though, is I'll turn it over to Jennifer just for specifics on the criteria that go into each of those highway assessments.

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: We monitor a number of things along the entire highway network. We're looking at the corridors. Again, it gets incorporated into the transportation plans that we prepare. And, again, there's extensive modelling that occurs as well, relating to what we expect to be growth that occurs.

In regard to expansion prioritization, we have nine factors that we take into account as we're looking at our expansion needs. The nine factors include items related to economic growth and development—so what occurs in terms of what we need for the movement of goods. We look at the economic benefit of the project itself. We look

at the congestion that occurs, and in terms of how we improve travel time. That travel time is not only for travellers in cars, but, of course, making sure that the goods that are being carried on our roadways and highways can make it in good travel time as well. And we also look at the combination of how we can be supporting the connection to other modes. You mentioned the Hamilton airport. That connection is important for us to look at in terms of when we're planning and prioritizing our expansion.

So then, of course, we also look at how it might connect with transit needs and in terms of how we look at all of our road users—so, again, looking at highway connections that connect in with transit connections, again, for travellers.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm going to approach this from a very selfish perspective and talk about that. This is purely anecdotal, but despite the fact that we've gone through a pandemic—and I'm told people are not going back to the office in Toronto—I cannot get over the amount of traffic, the volume of vehicles on the roads.

Years ago, when I moved to the Hamilton area, there were the set patterns of logjam, but it's 24/7. Sunday morning, there's a mass going by Burlington or Oakville, and you can barely get through. Are you noticing, and maybe you just can share—is there a significant increase, or is it just purely in my head, of traffic on the QEW between, say, Toronto and Fort Erie? Is it still increasing, on the rise?

Mr. Doug Jones: One thing I can share with you is that we're looking at the link between transit usage and roads. So we're still seeing that within the provincial transit systems, but also most municipalities across the province are still challenged to get transit ridership back to pre-pandemic levels. That's because people have options now. Their commuting behaviours have changed. They can work from home and such etc.

Anecdotally, what we're hearing is when those individuals do come in to the office one or two or three days a week or whatever it might be, again, anecdotally, people might select to drive that one time as opposed to—in the past, they might have had a transit pass for a month or something like that. We're trying to, again, study that and figure out exactly what's going on and also what do we have to do to make sure that transit is reliable and efficient and safe so that we encourage people back to transit as much as we possibly can, particularly as the population is increasing, and take that volume off the roads as best we can.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Maintenance and repair—again, another anecdotal perception: Anybody who drives in a municipality always complains about potholes. And I drive a lot. I drive up north, I drive to Ottawa and I drive in the GTA. But I think the provincial highways are superior, far superior, to anything I see on the municipal roads. Is that true and, if so, why is there such a discrepancy? Just in potholes alone, when you see the volume and you've got massive transit trucks on our provincial highways, they seem to be in much better repair.

Mr. Doug Jones: I hearken back to my days when I was working for municipalities while in charge of public

works and the two biggest complaints were snow removal and potholes. Those were the bane of my existence at the time.

Ms. Donna Skelly: And they still are.

Mr. Doug Jones: Nothing really changes.

I am really pleased, though, to say that Ontario has been recognized to have the third-best highway infrastructure in the country. I think it's only behind the Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan, so the province has been putting a fair bit of money into the roads and building them to proper specifications. There's a lot of reasons why you can get, for example, potholes in municipalities, because there's a lot of freeze-thaw cycles that, you know, if there's water on the roads or ice, you have to—

Ms. Donna Skelly: But we have that.

Mr. Doug Jones: You do; there are differences. We can maybe have a conversation off-line and then we can share some thoughts on that.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I won't chew up all your time.

The speed limit: We increased the speed limit. How has that fared?

Mr. Doug Jones: It's a pilot right now. The highways are designed to certain speeds and so the pilot areas that were selected were selected looking at the highway design for safety and capacity and saying, "Can it handle that increase in X number of kilometres across various 400-series highways in the future?" But it is a pilot and we're still waiting for the results to come in. I'd be happy to share those. I'm sure we will share those publicly when they do finalize it.

Jonathan, anything to add on that one?

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Not on that, but I think you're right, the pilots are in the midst of evaluation and undertaking studies. Just to hearken back to your two other points, if you don't mind: one is—not to tout the greater Golden Horseshoe plan—the importance of planning; one is your comment around Highway 6 to the Hamilton airport and the widening is part of the GTH plan because of the issues that you've identified, which means it's being prioritized and part of government decision-making.

The second thing is around growing gridlock and the sentiment, and similarly, if you look at the GTH plan, it talks about the QEW, 401 and some of those stretches that not only are increasing anecdotally but, because of population growth, are projected to increase if investments aren't made adequately in terms of alternatives and road alternatives. That all goes into the modelling work that we do, so I just wanted to embellish a bit on that because of your earlier comments.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. Road safety, in terms of whiteouts and just an effort to decrease the number of fatalities: I'll point to Highway 6 north, which is a very dangerous highway and part of the problem is that there's so many access points off the side of the road. It is a four-lane road without a defined barrier in between, which is very expensive if we made it, I guess. What do you call it when you have defined access points? Ramps?

Mr. Doug Jones: Controlled access.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Controlled access—that's very expensive. It's something that I'd like to see, but I don't think

it's in the works right now. How could you make a highway such as Highway 6 north, which has a tremendous amount of traffic towards Guelph—I'm talking about the 403 to Guelph—how could you make it safer so that you don't have vehicles with the whiteouts and crossing over and causing accidents and potential fatalities?

Mr. Doug Jones: Do you want to take that one?

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: Sure, happy to do that. In terms of how we tackle the winter conditions, part of it is about the presence of what we call our road weather information monitoring systems. So we monitor the conditions of the road; we have monitors in the pavement, and we also have monitors where we can actually see the snow conditions in cameras that you can also look at online and see what's happening along a particular stretch of highway. That provides information not only to travellers, but also to those who are doing our winter maintenance, making sure that they can get out and get moving on the highway in a very timely way and get the road cleared; making sure that we anticipate weather conditions, as well; and making sure we put out materials so that travellers, before the storm starts, will be able to have a good riding surface. That covers off the winter maintenance piece.

1430

In regard to corridors like Highway 6, we have a number of things: again, continuing to monitor the operations of the intersections; looking at when we need to make repairs in terms of enhancing those operations; upgrading intersections to interchanges when we see land development coming along—for instance, areas like Highways 5 and 6, those types of intersections, when they reach a certain capacity, need to be upgraded to interchanges—and also looking at, again, doing our planning for the future around protecting corridors for future expansion, so that we have a plan in place, so that when there's road development and development of homes and businesses along specific corridors, we have a plan so that we can expand it when it needs to be done.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. I know a bunch of other people want to speak, but two quick questions: When is the Highways 5 and 6 interchange going to be built? It has been on the books forever.

And the last question is: Why do we use white paint in Ontario on our lanes? Why can we not have a reflective paint, so that people like me, who hate driving in the rain at night, can see the bloody lanes? It doesn't make sense to me. We have snow and we have white lane markings. As we move forward, would we consider using a reflective, different-coloured paint, so that we can stay within the lane and I don't lose my licence?

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: In regard to Highways 5 and 6, we'll get back to you on that one.

In regard to pavement markings—if I may, Deputy—the pavement markings that we have, there are white pavement markings and there are yellow pavement markings. In construction zones, we use orange pavement markings from time to time—again, when we have some complex maneuvers—

Ms. Donna Skelly: And you can see them.

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: And you can see them. We have also piloted pink pavement markings, again in an effort to enhance visibility.

The white pavement markings are typically on four-lane roads where we have traffic going in the same direction, and so those pavement markings allow for advisory information. In terms of looking at pavement markings, again, we have ongoing research happening in terms of trying to continue to advance and have better and better pavement markings, because we know that on our winter roads, applying salt and then plowing over those markings means that we lose the reflectivity.

Pavement markings have paint, and then they have reflective beads that get embedded in that paint, and so those get brushed off, and we repaint. But during the winter period, we lose that surface, which loses the reflectivity, which is what you see. So then we come out and we redo that paint, in order to again restore that reflectivity.

Again, we're continuously doing research in terms of how we make for better pavement markings, things like: Do we do recessed pavement markings so you have less scraping? Do we look at different types of materials? And you'll see on certain stretches of highways there are what we call test sections. You will drive over, and we will measure the results of those test sections, and then use the information that we gather—and it will drive you crazy when you drive over it, but you're helping with our research in terms of testing for those pavement markings. Then that information gets embedded into our future purchasing of materials, and then we put those new pavement markings down. So we are working on continuous improvement, but it is always the more salt, the more plowing, the pavement markings wear out faster.

Mr. Doug Jones: If I may just add: As technology changes, too, there's a drive to develop better pavement markings for more visibility, because as cars become automated, your laser systems, your camera systems rely on "Okay, where are the markings?" It's a different world between Timmins and California. So there's a lot of interest in saying "What do we need to do to make sure lane markings are visible and durable, both for the drivers and for the technologies out there in the future?"

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. I'm going to pass it over, I think.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): MPP McCarthy, you have just under five minutes.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I think we can all agree, Mr. Chair, that the very detailed, thorough report of the Auditor General is very helpful and contains, by my count, 12 recommendations. I thank the deputy minister and his colleagues both for the opening statement and the answers thus far to the questions. But in dealing with the recommendations, I think I can discern that many of them have already been addressed. I realize it's only November 2022 that the report was issued, four months ago, but at this stage, four months after the report was issued, can you give me an idea: Are you in a position or is the deputy minister in a position to address and respond to all of the

recommendations in the near future, or have you already addressed them all?

Mr. Doug Jones: I trust we've provided updates to the Auditor General's office on what the status is currently. We've made some good progress on quite a few of them, and there are plans in place over the next six, 12, 24 months to address many more of them. But as I mentioned in my opening remarks, we were pleased that there was nothing, I'll say, new or earth-shattering in the Auditor General's report. They were emphasizing or building on some of the gaps that we knew were there and provided additional information and context on things we had to do to improve. We do update our status report on a regular basis, but we're generally pleased with where they are.

Jennifer, any thoughts on it?

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: In terms of the status of our projects, we've got timelines for every one of the recommendations that have been made to us. We are again continuing to advance things for each one of the items, and there are some that are already almost at the finish line in terms of being able to deliver.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: All right, thank you. I believe MPP Cuzzetto may have a final question before we wrap up this round.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: We all know that \$11 billion of goods are lost every day because of gridlock on our 400 highways, especially the area in the Golden Horseshoe. Building the 413, would that reduce the commute time for that area? Because Peel will be growing by 600,000 people by 2041.

Mr. Doug Jones: Thank you for the question.

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

Mr. Doug Jones: Pardon me?

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

Mr. Doug Jones: Okay. The population growth that I mentioned in my earlier remarks is substantial, and there are a lot of people that are going in here. We did recognize in the transportation plans that we had to expand both highways and transit to move people and goods as efficiently as possible. It's not about one or the other. It's a combination of the two. We also recognize that if we didn't do anything by 2031, the 407 would be, even with tolls in there, at or near capacity, and so there was additional development and expansion required. The study concluded that with the 413 being in place, it would save commuters about 30 minutes of travel time a day once that highway was completed.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: But there's some controversy there. Some people are saying 30 seconds, but there's 30 minutes of savings, correct?

Mr. Doug Jones: The 30-second comment was related to a report dated 2017, I believe it was, and it was an average about travel time across the wider greater Golden Horseshoe area. It would have included somebody travelling, say, from Oshawa to Pickering, or from Hamilton to Niagara Falls, which are nowhere near those highways, but that

was an average. It wasn't specific to people travelling on the highway expansion, being the 413.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: So you're saying that study of the 30 seconds was incorrect for that area?

Mr. Doug Jones: It's just how you interpret it, because it was a broad area. But if you focused specifically on where the 413 was, the 30 minutes is a more appropriate number.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We have less than 30 seconds.

Ms. Laura Smith: Oh.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We'll move to the next round—if you want? Okay.

We'll move on to the independent member. MPP Collard, you have three minutes.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to the presenters. I have to say I'm new on this committee this year, and I find it always very educational to learn about the various aspects that we're going through to study.

1440

On the highway part—actually, I wanted to ask about the toll highway, and it relates to a personal experience. I'm from Ottawa, so I prefer to take public transit when I can, but with COVID, I had to drive back and forth quite a bit. At some point, I had to drive through basically a snowstorm, and the 401 was really, really congested with a lot of trucks, and it was very stressful. I decided to take the 407, which is a toll highway. I was really surprised that when I got on the road, it was deserted. There was nobody on the road. So I thought, "Well, this is a great alternative." I used it to some extent, and then I got off at some point to the rest of my route. I thought, "Okay, maybe I'll use that." That's until I got the bill in the mail—and by the way, members, this is not expensable. And then I thought, "Okay, maybe not."

So I have a question for you. I'd like to know how the ministry monitors the usage of the toll highways and evaluates their effectiveness in reducing congestion on other highways like the 401.

Mr. Doug Jones: Highway 407, as you know, is owned and operated by a private consortium, and they set the toll rates on the highway depending on their business model. They also have some terms in there where they have to manage congestion levels. As part of our review or oversight of that operation, we get that data, and that informs us on how traffic volumes compare on that highway versus adjacent highways.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: So based on the money that comes in from the usage of the toll highway, you're able to determine that it's being used to a certain level. But how do you compare it to having an impact on the congestion on the other highways? I'm assuming additional roads are built so that people have options. How do you calculate the impact on the congestion on a very busy highway like the 401?

Mr. Doug Jones: I think the—

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Thirty seconds.

Mr. Doug Jones: Pardon?

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Thirty seconds.

Mr. Doug Jones: Okay.

I think the overarching transportation travel plans look at all the options and volumes and congestion on all of those adjacent highways, which is probably the best answer to that question. We can refer you to that transportation plan to show you that detail.

I just would like to emphasize too that with the growth we're anticipating, we would expect that the 407 by 2031 will be at or exceeding capacity without some expansion. Even though on particular days it may not be congested overall, with the growth that's coming, we're anticipating that it's going to be past its capacity and require some expansion in the future.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We're at time. We're now moving on to the second round, beginning with the official opposition. MPP Vaugeois.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Is the ministry also responsible for running the inspection stations and licensing?

Mr. Doug Jones: We're responsible for the inspection stations, yes. We look after the policy and legislation around licensing. The actual service of licensing is provided by the MPBSD, so business and service delivery.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Okay. The licensing is a huge topic, and I don't want to get into that today, anyway. But in terms of inspection stations, we had a trucker here earlier this week who travelled from Barrie to BC, and there was only one inspection open, in Hope, BC. The inspection station on the 102 hasn't been—I haven't seen anybody there in years and years and years, but it is being used as a truck route every day. So I'm wondering, is the budget there? Is there a reason that the inspection stations aren't being used?

Mr. Doug Jones: We have a certain number of staff that are available to perform their activities at the inspection stations, but those same transportation enforcement officers also conduct activities on the highways, so enforcement about—they're looking for vehicles that may be unsafe or could be speeding or just not as safe as they could be. The team will do some assessments and they will determine, based on the information they have, when is the riskiest time or the opportunity for them to staff a particular station, because you won't staff a station 24 hours a day, seven days a week. On some routes, you will say, "Okay, well, maybe Monday to Thursday evenings are busy," so you would staff according to that. Then at other times you will take those enforcement officers and they will be out on the highway. You'll see them out with their vehicles, and they might pull over a vehicle that they see has an unsafe load or something like that. It's really a combination of all those different types of activities, and the work at the inspection station is just part of what's going on in a particular area.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: What I'd like to suggest—I'm going to pass it on to France momentarily—is that there aren't enough, that there are all kinds of things going on with the trucks that cannot be seen in passing by an inspector on the road. They need to go through the inspection stations. They need to be looking underneath the trucks

for mechanical defects, for tire defects, all of those things that are happening—the carnage.

I was on Highway 17 last week. It was closed twice for two 12-hour blocks, with rows and rows of trucks. I couldn't go one way, because once the highway reopened, there were two tractor-trailers that smashed into each other. One of them died—incredible. So we were offered an alternative route, which would have taken us four hours to get up on Highway 11. Well, I wasn't going to take Highway 11, because a transport had taken out two houses in Beardmore, so what was the chance of getting through that way? Not very good.

There is a very serious problem with lack of inspection of the trucks, and I urge you to add staff so that that's taking place.

Mr. Doug Jones: Thank you for that.

What I can say to you is we're also investing in the inspection stations to make better use of technology. We've invested quite a bit in the Beamsville station, and, MPP Collard, you would see just east of Kingston there's a new inspection station that just opened in the last couple of months. That has quite a number of large bays where inspectors will be out underneath the trucks, looking at axles and all kinds of other things. It's set up. It's quite an expansion from what was normally there.

So we're using a combination of the technology and expansion of the existing services with the people who are available. But I take your comment. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): MPP Gélinas, 16 minutes remaining.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Very quickly: I cannot talk to good people like you without asking about the four-laning of Highway 69. We are always told that it is a high priority, yet I travel Highway 69 twice a week every week and we still have 69 kilometres of two-lane highways that scare the heebie-jeebies out of me every week. When are we going to see this four-laned?

Mr. Doug Jones: Did you want to take that?

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: There are a number of things that we need to do in terms of continuing the expansion of Highway 69, the most important of which is securing the lands that we need for the highway. We are continuing to do that. A lot of those negotiations and conversations are continuing, and we are continuing to advance the design and engineering for those sections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: When I talk to the chiefs of the First Nations along this, they tell me that they have not heard from you. They are waiting by the phone, and they have not heard from you.

Mr. Doug Jones: I'll maybe refer back to Jonathan, with the northern task force that we had with those Aboriginal communities.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Indigenous communities have definitely been part of, as we mentioned before, planning for the north and ensuring that this is a significant project that is prioritized. Now that we've identified that, as my colleague mentioned, it's about implementing. I think that's the nature of your question, right, MPP?

I think the province has had significant efforts to add the, I understand, 84 kilometres already widened, but there remains a piece, and I understand you're telling us about the urgency of advancing that, if I'm not mistaken.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Not a month goes by that there isn't a deadly accident on that road. It gets shut down, and same as what Lise was saying, I get rerouted all the way to North Bay and all of this to be able to get home. How many people will need to die before we go from "This is a priority" to actually four-laning Highway 69?

Mr. Doug Jones: I would like to just reiterate that safety and effective transportation are both priorities. I mentioned earlier that any injury or fatality is one too many; we don't want any at all.

As we advance our planning and put in things like our two-plus-one highway option that will improve safety in some areas, we're looking at, if we're doing a rehabilitation area, how we can improve safety in certain parts of those highways.

But the broader question—you asked about the entire highway, the entire length of it—is a longer question. We'll refer back to our northern transportation plan for more details on that, and we can refer you to that.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Sorry, just to add: The transportation plan itself identifies safety, of course, in terms of the key priority and how we have to work together around that, 100%. We're committed to that in terms of ensuring that we've learned from communities in the north, and we can put those in place.

1450

So I just want to reiterate what the deputy said. It's a serious issue, and no fatality should be required to emphasize the fact that the project has to advance. We're working on not just that initiative, but other safety plans in place too.

M^{me} France Gélinas: There's another area in my riding, Regional Road 55 at Highway 17 in Walden, which is the west part of Sudbury. The MTO has been super open. They've held consultations. They told us, "Here's the plan." We've seen what will happen with the overpass and all of this. And then they sit there and say, "But we have to wait until money is allocated."

Same thing: We've had multiple deaths. This is a regional road that dead-ends on a four-lane highway. You don't see it coming. People go through, a transport goes by, and end of—how could it be that all the work has been done, they've talked to the community, they've showed us the plan and nothing gets done?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Mr. Chair, if I just may raise a point of order: We are here to ask questions about the November 2022 report of the Auditor General. I know some leeway was given to MPP John Vanthof without my raising a point of order, but I think we're really straying into—it doesn't have to be the four corners of the report, but I think we're way off base here with this line of questioning, in my respectful submission.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It really has to do with the priorities. You explained to us the priority system that you have, the plan that you have. How do we go from a plan to action?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Mr. Chair, any death is tragic, and we've all seen it in our communities, but it's not the reason why we are here in terms of asking questions of the ministry representatives with respect to this report. We do have to stay on target.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Okay. Well, let's make every effort to stay within the audit and the results of the audit.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Right. So I just fail to see how this question does so.

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. And the transportation plan, is this something that you can share?

Mr. Doug Jones: It is published.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is published, okay. So it's something that you can share. And the last one had to do with the winter road maintenance on Highway 144. One part of Highway 144 is pretty well maintained, and then when the next contractors start, you can see where it starts because it never comes out. How do you review those? I mean, year after year we know that this contractor is not doing a good job because the contractor that goes up to where they switch does a nice job.

Mr. Doug Jones: I'm not familiar with the specific spot you're looking at, but I can tell you that there are a number of key performance indicators that we look at with all of these contracts. Where a contractor is not performing according to contract standards, there are actions taken about ensuring that they get back on track with their clearance, or there are some financial penalties in some cases. We're always looking to say, "Okay, if there are deficiencies in some areas, what steps do we need to do to improve that?" So feedback like you're just mentioning is important. We can take that back to the contractor to address it.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. Thank you.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: How much time do we have?

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): You have 10 minutes, 43 seconds.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you.

Since we are talking about the Auditor General's report, I'm going to ask a few questions on it. When I was on council, it frustrated me to no end when a municipal council—because we spent a lot of time putting together an asset management plan of what our township had and what we needed to do for upper-level government, and after that, no one ever asked us about it again because the priority of the province or the feds was X, Y or Z. It had nothing to do with the work we had done for the asset management plan.

I've been hearing a lot about plans here. I take it there are four transportation plans across the province. Are all four of them final?

Mr. Doug Jones: They're in a draft format right now. The plans, I would say, are iterative all the time, because when you finish a plan, it doesn't always just stay the same. Things change in the environment: for example, even the population growth that we were referring to. Two years ago, we looked at a 36% increase over X number of years. Now, with the changes in the immigration targets, we're

looking at 38%, so that changes things. The plans are never always just finished; they're always, "Okay, what's the next stage? How do we update it?"

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay, that makes sense. So the four plans are all in draft or is one final, three in draft, like—

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: So there are four plans and one planned as well—sorry for the word plan on plan. The south-western plan is a draft, so more work continues on that; same with the north and the eastern. The greater Golden Horseshoe plan has been finalized and now we're switching gears into implementation, planning and costing and the like, and the province is committed to establishing an Ontario-wide plan, as well.

Mr. John Vanthof: So when a plan is finalized, does that include—and I understand that it has to be a living plan?

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: But are there costs and timelines included with the plan? Is that part of the plan?

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: There was some formative preliminary work done on timelines and costing, but as per the auditor's recommendation, which we take quite seriously, now we've switched gears into really trying to advance that work more specifically. For instance, the greater Golden Horseshoe plan that's one of the four plans that's been considered final. Now we're starting to do more detailed work around costing and timelines and implementation, really trying to learn from what the Auditor General suggested.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm just trying to conceptualize these plans in my way of thinking. So I take it a plan would be short-, medium- and long-term as population grows? So at the costing for a long-term project—let's say, the four-laning of Highway 11 or basically building a completely new highway, because it would have to be a controlled access highway, right? That would be long-term and it would be almost impossible to cost that.

Mr. Doug Jones: It's directional, but you update as you go and, as you get closer, then you get your bids and your estimates based on current prices at that time.

Mr. John Vanthof: But would you have a ballpark somewhere? And I'm not saying it has to be public, but something in mind, what it would cost? I'm not asking for the number. I'm just asking, in your planning process—

Mr. Doug Jones: You have an initial idea, but then when you start looking as to what are the ground conditions like, what are some of the unexpected things you might see, you start refining that number and it becomes a little more accurate as time goes on.

Mr. John Vanthof: And so the total four regional plans would feed into the provincial plan?

Mr. Doug Jones: Right.

Mr. John Vanthof: And that happens on an ongoing basis, or an annual basis? A quarterly basis?

Mr. Doug Jones: It's annually. We've announced that we have a 10-year plan right now, so with highways and transit in total, it's approximately \$100 billion in investments that we're going to make over the next decade.

Mr. John Vanthof: My colleague asked about the northern task force. It was recently announced and I actually know—that might actually hurt them, but I

actually know a lot of the people on the task force and we were encouraged by the nominations. There's quality people on there. But from our perspective, the northern task force was partly a response to frustration with what was happening in northern Ontario, not actually part of the planning process. So now are they part of the planning process? Because they are coming out with their own recommendations, as well, that are not necessarily—or are they part of the plan?

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: They are. I have not heard of their own recommendations. They are part of the planning process. They're feeding in directly and I think the MPP mentioned a report coming up in the spring, the finalization. They've been part of it and contributing to that directly.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay, so that report would be part of the longer-term plan?

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: That's right. That will be the finalization of that report. It was in draft so that they can have broader engagement and consultation with the task force and with the public. Now we're entering the finalization of that report and then that will turn into, as we talked about before to your good question, how do you implement? What's the timeline? What are the key metrics? What's the costing and detail? That becomes the next phase thereafter.

Mr. John Vanthof: That does clarify it because I'd say from laypeople's perspective, they don't see it as the MTO plan. They see it as northern task force recommendations. So they're not actually two separate things there?

1500

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I know. I get frustrated all the time.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: It's one product that they're feeding into in support of the ministries and governments in the Northern Ontario Transportation Plan. That's right.

And really, the task force informs the finalization of the plan. It's the government's plan, so they feed in. They provide their advice, they review the recommendations and they feed in, and the government considers that plan as it would other plans.

Mr. John Vanthof: The plan itself—how do I choose my words? Would licensing and regulation and enforcement fit in the long-term plan too, or is that a separate—

Mr. Doug Jones: Those are separate considerations. We look at the building of the infrastructure as one plan, and then we look at the enforcement and things of that nature.

Mr. John Vanthof: So they are two separate entities, okay. Although they do depend on one another, right? With no enforcement, it doesn't matter how many lanes you have.

Mr. Doug Jones: Exactly.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay.

Getting back to my colleague's question, the amount of way stations, that would be in more the long-term plan, because they're building a big new one in Thunder Bay, right?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: A new way station between Nipigon and Thunder Bay.

Mr. John Vanthof: You take the way station question, okay?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Yes. There's a new one coming between Nipigon and Thunder Bay, which is great because every truck is going to go past there. It includes both the 11 and 17 at that point.

But what was the question?

Mr. John Vanthof: But also, the cost and the construction of facilities like that, that would be in the long-term plan?

Mr. Doug Jones: Not for the building of the infrastructure, no. We look at that separately.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay. I'm just trying to figure out in my mind what is part of this plan.

Mr. Doug Jones: The long-term planning is more about what are the roads we're going to build, what are the bridges we need to build, how wide does the highway have to be, those kinds of things. The auxiliary things that might surround that would be in a separate budget.

Mr. John Vanthof: Then that brings me back to—because the northern task force is very important to us. It's part of the long-term plan, but if the northern task force recommends hiring more enforcement, that's not part of the plan. That would be a separate recommendation.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): One minute, 45 seconds.

Mr. Doug Jones: We would still take the recommendation and incorporate it into the appropriate plan. It may not be that long-term transportation plan, but—

Mr. John Vanthof: It might not be the construction plan, but it would be—okay.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Just to embellish upon that—that's okay?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, please.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Just to add, the plan is to set the vision for the north, from now into the future, for northern Ontario transportation. As you're talking, you're talking about very important practical realities. How does that fit with northern transportation? The Northern Ontario Transportation Plan talks about the goals: getting people moving and connecting communities.

You've talked about connecting communities. There are different ways to do that: enabling economic opportunity through multimodal use with highways and ports and the like, keeping people safe. That clearly depends on the way stations and the like, but it's broader in terms of the vision and the policy direction from the government, which we then take and build into, if government endorses that, the work we do and the work that they fund year over year to actually get into the specifics of what are the investments they're making.

So it really tries to set the frame and the broader longer-term vision for that.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: I hope that helps.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): With only 30 seconds left, we will be moving on to the government side for their second round. Who will begin? MPP Laura Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Chair: We talked about connecting communities. And by the way, thank you all for your submissions. We appreciate all that you do to keep us safe on the highways. We were talking about connecting communities and reliable movement for people and goods and travel demands. I represent Thornhill. I very selfishly will also talk about the adjacent 400 and Highway 7 that gets a lot of my community and other communities going.

We're going to get into the recommendations that were provided by the auditor and the travel demand forecasting model, how it's utilized by the MTO in demanding forecast models that you see going into the future, given the demands of the communities that are going to be with us for years to come, to be built in years to come.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Thank you for the question, MPP, through the Chair. The report gets to the fact that we rely upon significant internal expertise in terms of transportation demand management, which also gets to the question that was asked earlier about tolling—just to add that.

We've got two different models that the ministry has identified and developed that take a significant amount of input, and they track parking, transit, projected transit use and transportation use, current demand and forecasted demand as well, behavioural anticipated models, changes in innovation and the like, forecasted growth, population growth. We use those to inform business cases that the government identifies in terms of what investments are required and where.

So we talked about that broader plan multiple times, but that's also matched with, in granular form, significant modelling that the ministry does with our experts and external experts, as well, around: how does that translate, is there an actual need, how would investments in a certain project inform connected uses in other projects as well, in transit and transportation and the like.

So we have significant models that look at behavioural and transportation patterns, socio-economic data, observe traffic and the like, and it crosses boundaries. You talked about York. One of our models is really GGH-specific, not just looking at Toronto and York separately but integrated, and one is province-wide.

Ms. Laura Smith: It's complicated, I guess, because you're taking—I very selfishly advised that I was representing the community of Thornhill, but obviously—

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Oh, sorry—

Ms. Laura Smith: No, no. Absolutely, because somebody travels through Thornhill to get to anywhere, literally.

We talked about the data sources that you provide for road maintenance. Is that incorporated into the same data that's relied upon for future prognosis of the utilization of roads?

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: It is integrated in some. If you're interested, I could go into it, but we've got a variety of data sources, including the current use and, as you mentioned, maintenance but also our Transportation Tomorrow Survey, which talks about forecasting use and what's the anticipated need. We look at census data, the road networks, StatsCan. We have quite the involved set of data sources as well.

Ms. Laura Smith: And that technology would obviously expand as technology changes and the data as well. We were looking earlier. I was mesmerized by the vehicles that are utilized to provide the data, which I find incredibly informative.

I would say I'm a neophyte in certain areas, and understanding the data in scanning a road is something that is a process in the making for me. But you would use that same future data to improve on what's going to be happening in York region or the GTA or Ontario-wide?

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: Yes, 100%. I, too, am a neophyte, but there are significant experts in the ministry that work on that, that do that exactly: look at new data, enhancing our data sources and building and working with municipalities and municipal transit but also municipal governments on shared data as well and in terms of future use as well. And not just the data but, as you mentioned, we're constantly refining our models as well and testing and verifying and validating them as well.

Ms. Laura Smith: Just circling back to the models themselves, I guess you experiment with different models to see how accurate they are, how they work at that time, because that's just a moment in time. Capturing the data during COVID would not be accurate—you have allowances for that, and that allows you to really pinpoint what is necessary at that time and what's happening in that circumstance.

Mr. Jonathan Lebi: For sure, and there's a long-term forecast that we use as well, better informed from pre-COVID and during COVID, in terms of utilization and behavioural economics as well, and future. We're looking at multiple variables, and one of the components, the types of data we look at, is behavioural and travel pattern data, which changes. So you're right: In COVID, it was different—some of them—and as the deputy had mentioned, transit systems have recovered; some have not. So we use that as inputs as well, for sure.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you very much. I'm going to transfer some of my time to a colleague.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): MPP Cuzzetto, you have 14 minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Just really quickly, I'm going to take you from the north that I spoke of, Peel, right down to the south and to Port Credit. As you're aware, we're building an LRT, a new Port Credit GO train station and a BRT in that area. How does the region of Peel or the municipality itself work out plans for all this transportation to occur in that area?

1510

Mr. Doug Jones: I think you're getting into an area that's kind of outside of my jurisdiction when you start talking about what the region is doing. We'd probably have to dig into that one a little bit and get back to you on it.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Do you agree that once we do build all this transit around there, to support transit we need density around the transit hubs?

Mr. Doug Jones: I think the transit hubs are really great opportunities for us to accommodate the population growth

that we're seeing, because the transit-oriented communities by themselves provide that opportunity where you can have a 10- or 15-minute city or neighbourhood where you can have people living. They can get what they need on a daily basis within walking distance. If they have to travel somewhere, they've got a great opportunity to hop on an efficient, well-connected transit system and not require a vehicle.

Some of the transit-oriented communities that are being developed and considered have quite a bit of population density planned for around them. It's really critical, I think, for the densification of some of the cities and trying to avoid more sprawl that might go on and try to build up instead of out as much as possible. So I think it's great.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Yes, I agree totally with you. I don't know if you're aware, but I have 26 ratepayer groups in that area. Right now, I'm having a lot of pushback due to the fact that the parking lot was sold by MTO because the community did not want the parking lot at the GO train station—they did not want a parking structure.

So now a developer has bought that land. He wants to build two 40-storey buildings there. But I agree totally that if we build 40 storeys, it will reduce people getting into their vehicles, so they can use public transit. How do I work around that right now?

Mr. Doug Jones: I think that is, again, something we'd have to look into a little deeper. It's outside of the things I was prepared to look at today, so apologies.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Any further questions on the government side? No?

We're moving on to the independent member. You have three minutes.

Mme Lucille Collard: I can't help but notice that there was a change in the projects that were selected at a certain point over the course of that study, and one in Ottawa that ranked really high got dropped off in favour of some project with lower priority. I understand that change of government includes change of priorities, but the Auditor General pointed to the fact that there was no process to address recommendations that don't align with the recommendation. You mentioned in your response that appropriate actions will be taken, should any misalignment arise.

I would just like to hear more. What's the plan? What are these appropriate actions that you intend to take if misalignment happened?

Mr. Doug Jones: One of the biggest things that we're going to do is build out the planning process so there's more transparency on how decisions are made. The Auditor General referred to some technical criteria or technical evaluation that was done within the ministry, but that's not the only information we use to determine when a project might occur, because we do have to—for expansion projects, although we might identify that this is work that needs to be done, we also have to look at when the funding is available and how much consultation might be required with stakeholders in the area.

We also look at links—I think there was a mention of them over here—with what the municipalities are doing,

because if the municipality, for example, has a plan to invest or build something that would be adjacent to that work in two years, it's always better to integrate that work as much as we can so that it reduces cost and you don't build something one day only to tear up 5% or 10% of it a year or two later to build something else.

What we're going to do is take that model that we've developed and then start incorporating more of these decision criteria into it so that it's much more transparent, and say, "This is how we're going to make some recommendations to the government to advance."

One thing about the expansion projects is we always have a window. It's not to say that in 2023 or 2024, these are the exact projects we're going to do. It will fluctuate, give or take, two or three years on either side.

That's what happened in this case, is that there were some adjustments over a couple of years, but everything got funded at the end of the day and we're thankful for that.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: On a different topic, we talked about ARAN and how effective they are, but sometimes you're not using them; you're using manual assessments, because they may not be able to identify some of the deficiencies, like a culvert you mentioned as an example.

I'm just wondering, first, if you can talk a bit more about the ARAN, the automatic assessment. I just saw a picture of the vehicle. Those vehicles that contain the ARAN are driven by people, by staff, so why couldn't they combine a manual assessment while doing the ARAN? That would give a more complete picture.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We're at time. If you could just give a really, really quick answer.

Mr. Doug Jones: I'll answer the second part of it first. The individual who is driving the vehicle drives at posted speed, so if that's 80 or 90 or 100 kilometres an hour, it would be unsafe for them to start looking at things. They run down the highway and then we have a different team that comes in and spends more time looking at the conditions in the adjacent area, to make that work.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Gotcha. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): We discussed that at this time we would be taking a recess. However, we're anticipating the vote very quickly. It should be happening at any moment now, at which point we're of course going to have to recess for at least 10 to 15 minutes.

Are either the government, the opposition or the independents seeking additional rounds of questions?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: We've finished two rounds now. We have report writing when we return, so the question is, do we want to start any—I think the MPP to my right, Mr. Vanthof, had a few more questions, if he wants to start that. We may be able to finish all the questions before the vote.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Then we could begin with the official opposition now.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Sorry—did we answer the question? The question was, do we need more time or do we want more rounds?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: What I'm thinking, Mr. Chair, is that we don't want to keep the ministry officials here to return after the break if all we're doing is coming back for report writing—

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): It wasn't necessarily asking for a vote at this point; it was just, "Are there any more questions?"

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Right. We don't have any.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): There are none on the government side, but the official opposition has indicated they have a couple of questions.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I'm hoping that we can finish the questions and return only for—

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): So let's—

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: We don't need to detain the ministry officials any further, then, hopefully, if we can—

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Without further ado, then, let's proceed.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: So the MTO has a lot of experience building highways. I'm just wondering why the expansion of Highway 3 and the expansion of Highway 17 through Renfrew are being delivered by P3. If you can answer, what is the value for money on spending more on a P3 than having the MTO deliver these projects?

Mr. Doug Jones: Maybe I'll start, and then I can turn it over to my colleague. When we look at projects, we work with Infrastructure Ontario very closely to determine what's the best delivery model, whether it's a traditional model or whether we would look at P3s. P3s are considered for any job that's over \$100 million, and so then we look at those projects and say, "Okay, is there value for money, and are we going to get benefits around the risk transfer that we want to move to the private sector, to the contractor, based on the nature of the project? And can we have a project that has various degrees of certainty around cost or schedule?" Those are some of the criteria that are evaluated with the delivery model.

Specifically to that highway—Jennifer?

Ms. Jennifer Graham Harkness: We go through, with Infrastructure Ontario, an analysis of what's called—we assess delivery options, and we'll look at a wide range of delivery options that we have. Whether it be delivered through what's called a design-bid build or a design-tender build, we could be looking at a design build and, again, looking at whether or not it's a design-build finance and so forth.

So we go through and we do a delivery options analysis, and with that, as the deputy has indicated, we will look at what are the opportunities that we would have with the various delivery models, really looking at the focus of the project and making sure that we're looking at what's best for the project in terms of that delivery model, with that in mind, and what gets us the greatest opportunity in terms of getting contractor innovation or looking at both cost and schedule certainty.

So in terms of that, when we look at Highway 3 or we look at Highway 17, when we did the initial delivery options analysis, it turned out that the delivery model for the DBF for Highway 3 at that point in time brought us the

best option for that particular highway, and again, looking at the same for Highway 17.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: So it's really about scheduling; I'm thinking scheduling and availability of the people. You did just give kind of a list of criteria, but it does cost more, correct, to do the P3 model?

Mr. Doug Jones: Not necessarily, no. It's really dependent on the project. Where P3 is selected and they go through the value-for-money analysis, it should have a positive value for money as part of the whole project.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you.

Mr. John Vanthof: Just one quick question that came up from the government side regarding the gas tax. As we switch to electric, the gas tax will be different, but it got me to thinking. It's going to be kind of odd that as we switch to electric vehicles, and as much of the raw resources for electric vehicles come from the north, that if I look at where gas is now available, and if that's where charging stations are going to be available, many people in northern Ontario are not going to be able to use electric cars. Has the MTO thought about that? Because there are big chunks where there are hours where there's no fuel stop, and if it doesn't make sense for the private sector to put in fuel stops, is the private sector going to put in charging stations? Has anybody thought about that?

Mr. Doug Jones: There's a lot of interest in that, for sure. There are tens of millions of dollars being invested in charging stations across the province, but the government plays one role in it and then the private sector will step in. The private sector has been installing charging systems in certain areas. The north certainly is going to be a different beast than the south.

We're also looking at what's going on in the transportation industry because—I'll use buses for an example. There's a lot of interest in electric buses, but they travel, let's say, 100, 120 kilometres a day or something and you

can use that. When you get into longer routes, then the industry is starting to look at does hydrogen make sense, and hydrogen fuel cells, because there's greater availability, there's more energy available. And so what do the large trucks use to carry the load and also travel the distance? And technologies around batteries and battery capacities are also changing. So we layer all those on top of each other. But with the direction that the vehicle manufacturers are going, and some countries around the world are saying, "No combustion engines are to be produced after X date," there's a real push for the industry to develop the technology that will support that electrification.

Mr. John Vanthof: We fully agree, but I know I drive a hybrid, and when it's minus 25, hybrid makes no difference. It doesn't save on gas at all—nothing. So if you're driving—unless technology changes, if you're driving a full electric, you're going to need charging stations pretty badly in northern Ontario. It's something that a lot of people don't think about, but at one point, everyone is going to drive across northern Ontario. Anyways, thank you very much. I know it's kind of out of the league of the report, but I appreciate the answer.

Mr. Doug Jones: It's very relevant, though. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Any further questions? The government side has said no further questions as well as the independent member has indicated no further questions.

So that concludes the time for questions this afternoon. I'd like to thank all of you for appearing before the committee today and thank you so much for your hard work. We will now pause briefly to go into closed session. Of course, we are anticipating a vote any moment, so this is going to be a recess. We'll be returning after the vote.

The committee recessed at 1524 and later continued in closed session.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Chair / Président

Mr. Tom Rakocevic (Humber River–Black Creek ND)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente

Ms. Donna Skelly (Flamborough–Glanbrook PC)

Mr. Will Bouma (Brantford–Brant PC)

Mr. Rick Byers (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound PC)

M^{me} Lucille Collard (Ottawa–Vanier L)

Mr. Stephen Crawford (Oakville PC)

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto (Mississauga–Lakeshore PC)

M^{me} France Gélinas (Nickel Belt ND)

Mr. Logan Kanapathi (Markham–Thornhill PC)

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy (Durham PC)

Mr. Tom Rakocevic (Humber River–Black Creek ND)

Ms. Donna Skelly (Flamborough–Glanbrook PC)

Ms. Laura Smith (Thornhill PC)

MPP Lise Vaugeois (Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Supérieur-Nord ND)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. John Vanthof (Timiskaming–Cochrane ND)

Clerk / Greffière

Ms. Tanzima Khan

Staff / Personnel

Mr. Dmitry Granovsky, research officer,
Research Services