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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

HE-61

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-61

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

Safer Roads and Communities
Act, 2024

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Wednesday 13 November 2024

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

Loi de 2024 pour prévoir
des routes et des collectivités
plus sûres

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mercredi 13 novembre 2024

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Wednesday 13 November 2024

Mercredi 13 novembre 2024

The committee met at 1100 in committee room 1.

**SAFER ROADS AND COMMUNITIES
ACT, 2024**

**LOI DE 2024 POUR PRÉVOIR DES ROUTES
ET DES COLLECTIVITÉS PLUS SÛRES**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 197, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act /
Projet de loi 197, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Good morning. I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy to order. We are meeting to begin public hearings on Bill 197, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act.

Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments should go through the Chair. Please note that the committee will recess at noon and resume at 1 p.m.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I will now call on MPP Ric Bresee, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation. MPP Bresee, you will have up to 20 minutes for your opening statement, followed by 40 minutes of questioning from the members of the committee. The questions will be divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of five minutes for the independent members of the committee.

MPP Bresee, the floor is yours. Please begin.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to all of you for attending today. It's an important bill, and we look forward to moving through it.

Since day one, our government has been on a mission to do all we can to keep Ontario families safe. Our Safer Roads and Communities Act, if passed, will do just that. Unfortunately, far too often, we see the harms arising from impaired driving: parents, siblings, children, other family and friends who have all had their world turned upside down because of the selfish and reckless actions of another person. That's why our government has tabled the Safer Roads and Communities Act, which will introduce some of the toughest penalties for impaired driving in all of Canada.

If you decide to get behind the wheel impaired and risk people's lives, you deserve more than just a slap on the wrist; you deserve a lot more. I've heard from far too many families whose lives have been torn apart, only for the offender to be back out on the street or back out in their car in no time.

When we introduced the Safer Roads and Communities Act earlier this year, we did so with the support of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, an organization committed to bringing about change in driving habits. Why? Because too many governments of all stripes have simply failed to deliver. Steve Sullivan, the CEO of MADD, welcomed the bill, noting that despite all the information widely available, too many people are still making the terrible choice to drive drunk.

Carolyn Swinson of MADD Toronto also voiced her support. There are few who can speak on the need to tackle this tragic issue more passionately than Ms. Swinson. She lost both her father and her son in separate collisions, both involving impaired drivers. These are unthinkable tragedies that no one should have to suffer through. We owe it to people like Ms. Swinson and to everyone in Ontario to do everything we can to keep impaired drivers off the road.

It's not just MADD Canada highlighting the need for more action. Collision statistics paint a bleak picture. Between 2012 and 2022, fatalities on Ontario's roadways have increased by 7%. Someone is seriously injured on our roads every six hours, and at least one person is killed every single day. We can lay much of the blame on impaired driving, which is a factor in at least one third of all fatal collisions. We know from the Ministry of Transportation's 2022 roadside survey that one in five drivers who provided a sample at random tested positive for drugs, alcohol or both. That's simply unacceptable. As a government, we have a responsibility to do something about it.

For too long, Ontario has looked the other way when drivers put other people's lives in jeopardy. This needs to change. We need to send a message to anyone who engages in unsafe, high-risk behaviour like impaired driving, street racing or stunt driving. We need to show people that the consequences are severe. With the Safer Roads and Communities Act, we're making it crystal clear that anyone who chooses to endanger others with their recklessness will pay a steep price. If you kill someone while you're driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, our government believes that you have forfeited your right to drive. What kind of message does anything else say to the families who have

lost their loved ones? And what message would it send to Ontarians whose lives have been changed forever?

If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, anyone convicted of impaired driving causing death would receive a lifetime driver's licence suspension—permanent. When you destroy lives with your recklessness, you don't deserve to get back on the road—not now, not ever. Those who lose their lives never get a second chance, so those drivers don't deserve one either. We need to be as tough as possible on those who break the rules and that's what we will do if this bill passes. I'm actually very proud to be part of a government that's willing to crack down on impaired driving, running amok on our roadways.

Please, think of Carolyn Swinson of MADD, who lost her father and son in impaired driving incidents. These tragedies could have been avoided. We need to do everything in our power to prevent more fatal collisions from occurring. Now is not the time to be soft on drivers who roll the dice with other people's lives. Now is the time to send a clear message, and that's exactly what we'll do if the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes.

We know that impaired driving is a terrible choice that all too often leads to the worst possible outcomes. Even if someone isn't horribly injured, we need to make sure those drivers who drive drunk think twice about getting behind the wheel impaired again. In fact, we need to make sure you can't get behind the wheel if you're impaired. That is why our government is also introducing regulations that would require anyone convicted of impaired driving to install an ignition interlock device once their licence is reinstated.

Until now, those convicted of impaired driving could simply wait out the time period for an interlock before driving again. This shouldn't be a requirement that you can somehow avoid. When you make the terrible choice to drive impaired, our government isn't going to let you sit out the ignition interlock period by serving a longer licence suspension. We want proof that you're not getting behind the wheel impaired. We're going to require everyone who has been convicted of impaired driving to install an ignition interlock for a prescribed period of time. If you're impaired, you'll simply need to find another mode of transportation.

Even though Ontario has some of the safest roads in North America, and even though we've ranked among the top-five jurisdictions with the lowest fatality rates per 10,000 licensed drivers decade after decade, there is always more we can do. We know that impaired driving is a lingering problem that tears families apart. It ruins lives. That's why we're introducing a time-limited, zero-tolerance condition following an impaired driver's mandatory ignition interlock period. This would apply to the presence of alcohol and drugs. Installing an ignition interlock device is a great way to keep impaired drivers off the road, but once you remove that device from your car, that shouldn't mean you're off the hook. A zero-tolerance condition will make you think long and hard about making that same mistake and that same bad choice again. Is it worth the risk that you could lose your licence? Is it worth the risk that you could kill someone? Impaired driving is simply never worth the risk, and we're going to make sure that Ontarians remember that.

We're also going to keep drivers off the road longer when they test positive for drugs or alcohol. Drivers currently receive a three-day roadside licence suspension for the first drug-or-alcohol-related occurrence and a seven-day suspension for their second occurrence. That's in addition to monetary penalties, reinstatement fees, remedial education and treatment requirements. These roadside suspensions simply aren't long enough. If we want to deter people from driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, we need tougher penalties.

If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, drivers would receive a seven-day suspension for their first occurrence and a 14-day suspension for their second occurrence. Additionally, drivers would be required to complete a remedial education course after the first occurrence and a mandatory treatment program at their second, because we know some drivers need help with their addictions.

Currently, licence suspensions and administrative monetary penalties have a five-year look-back period for determining escalating sanctions at the roadside, but ignition interlock and remedial education requirements have a 10-year look-back period. The Safer Roads and Communities Act would harmonize all look-back periods to 10 years to increase the severity of penalties for drivers who repeatedly break the rules. Our government has a long memory when it comes to impaired drivers: Get behind the wheel impaired, and you'll have to wait an entire decade before you get a fresh start.

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So what can we take from all of this? To anyone who gets behind the wheel under the influence of drugs or alcohol and thinks they'll get away with it, you better think again. Some impaired drivers who see a police cruiser in the rear-view mirror might think they can just pull off the highway and avoid being stopped for sobriety testing. If that's what you think, you're wrong again. Our government is making that clear. If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, it will amend the Highway Traffic Act to clarify that the police have the authority to stop vehicles for sobriety testing whether on or off provincial highways, because there should be nowhere you can run when you're driving impaired. You shouldn't be able to avoid charges on a technicality; the police will find you, and you will face the full consequences of your actions.

Impaired drivers are, unfortunately, far from the only threat on our roads. Stunt drivers are just as reckless and just as selfish, and they're just as capable of causing tragedies. In 2021, our government tabled the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, which increased driver's licence suspensions for stunt driving convictions. The first conviction comes with a one-year suspension; the second, a three-year suspension; and the third conviction comes with a lifetime suspension. There's just one problem: Currently, these suspensions require a court order, which means driver's licence suspensions aren't applied in all stunt driving convictions. We intend to change that. If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, it would amend the Highway Traffic Act to make sure that anyone convicted of stunt driving faces a minimum mandatory licence suspension. It's a minimum of one year for the first conviction, three

years for the second conviction and a lifetime suspension for a third conviction—no exceptions. Put other people's lives at risk to find out just how severe those consequences can be.

The fact is most people on the roads follow the rules, drive safely and stay out of trouble. The vast majority of our drivers are law-abiding, and these individuals should never have to feel afraid when they get behind the wheel. They shouldn't have to wonder whether there's an impaired driver coming around the next bend, they shouldn't have to worry about a stunt driver whizzing past them at lightning speed and they shouldn't live in fear of being held up at gunpoint by violent car thieves.

In this province, a vehicle is stolen every 14 minutes. Motor theft in the Peel region has increased by 187% since 2019. Although some may think car theft is a victimless crime, the increase in theft is accompanied by an unfortunate increase in violence. Toronto has seen a 78% increase in violent carjackings since 2021. Hard-working Ontarians are held at gunpoint by criminals in masks and ordered to hand over their keys. This is not just a road issue or a vehicle issue; this is a public safety epidemic, and this isn't the Ontario families want to live in. This isn't the Ontario that anyone wants to win live in. Auto theft has become a plague in this province, and our government is going to do something about it. That's why the Safer Roads and Communities Act would introduce escalating driver's licence suspensions for those convicted of motor vehicle theft, and they'll stay off the road for a very long time. The first offence will land a 10-year licence suspension. If they try to do it again, that's a 15-year licence suspension, and a third offence will come with a lifetime suspension of their driver's licence.

This is the type of bold action that our province needs to crack down on auto theft, and it's not just our government saying that. Auto retailers, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, vehicle manufacturers and big-city mayors have all voiced their support for the Safer Roads and Communities Act. They see this bill's potential to revolutionize road safety here in Ontario to stop car thieves in their tracks. And if this bill passes, that's exactly what we we'll do.

We know that commercial vehicles are the lifeblood of our economy. They carry the goods that Ontarians need all across the province and across the country. The trucking industry provides vital services, and this is a service that we rely on every single day of the year. Our reliance on the trucking industry is exactly why we need stringent safety standards.

We know commercial vehicles, if not operated properly, can be dangerous. That's why our government has planned to oversee a safer commercial vehicle industry. One of the best ways we can do that is by strengthening the MTO transportation enforcement officers' ability to carry out the commercial vehicle and enforcement program. We need to ensure that enforcement officers have every tool they need to carry out their duties effectively. If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, it will amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow transportation enforcement officers to exceed posted speed limits for enforcement

purposes. Enforcement officers would have the authority to seize suspended and fraudulent drivers' licences, and drivers would be required to move over to the side of the road when MTO enforcement vehicles have their lights and signals flashing, like all other first responders.

These are measures that will make sure that commercial drivers are following the regulations, adhering to traffic laws and brought into compliance if they aren't. These measures were built on our recent successes that are improving commercial vehicle safety.

Last year, we strengthened commercial vehicle enforcement in northern Ontario. Since then, our MTO officers have conducted 6,594 inspections and laid 5,298 charges, including 912 for speeding. Earlier this year, Minister Sarkaria announced our opening of a \$30-million commercial vehicle inspection station on the Trans-Canada Highway near Thunder Bay. By introducing legislation to help transportation enforcement officers carry out their duties, we are taking a bold step toward our never-ending mission to improve road safety in every corner of the province.

The bill is also laying the groundwork for improved e-bike safety. E-bikes have become increasingly common on Ontario's roads, but they're not all built the same. Too many are heavier than allowed. Too many exceed the speed limits that are available. Many are more dangerous than are legally permitted on our roads. We need to do something about this.

If the Safer Roads and Communities Act passes, it will create regulation-making powers within the Highway Traffic Act that allow us to categorize e-bikes into distinct classes. That's an important step forward in ensuring unsafe e-bikes aren't putting their riders, other cyclists, pedestrians and even other cars at risk on our roadway. Each class of e-bike would have its own operator and vehicle safety requirements, helping us protect all road users, e-bike riders included.

As we carry out our work to build a better Ontario, as we invest \$100 billion over the next decade to build roads, highways, bridges and the public transit that will propel our province into the future, we cannot lose sight of our most important investment, our most important asset, and that's the people who call this province home.

The Safer Roads and Communities Act captures our vision for the future of road safety in this province. This legislation, if passed, will crack down on impaired drivers, car thieves and stunt drivers, helping to ensure more families and more Ontarians get home safely to their families each night. It will strengthen commercial vehicle safety and e-bike safety so that we can all share the road with confidence, and it will help to ensure a brighter future for all of us in Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining, if you want to use that.

Mr. Ric Bresee: It's all good. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Okay. Just so that members know, I will notify you when there's one minute remaining in your rotation.

This round of questions will start with the official opposition. MPP French, you have seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Mr. Bresee, for your comments. I had been looking forward to going toe to toe with the minister, but I'm happy to see you here today. Thank you for your presentation.

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I think all Ontarians are quite concerned about what they see in their communities on their roads and would like to see a bill called Safer Roads and Communities Act make the changes that they, I think, deserve to see.

I'm going to start with some of the points that you had made. This is a bill that is bringing forward a significant number of penalties, which is good but it's after the fact. So I think when there are government policies on the books that allow folks to plead down—holdovers from the pandemic—my question is about that. If people plead down and these penalties don't apply, what then? And will the government make moves to ensure people can't plead down when they're violating a law?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I appreciate the question and do understand that you, MPP French, have done a lot of work and a lot of advocacy toward road safety. It's commendable.

We will continue to work with all of our systems across government to ensure that our roads are as safe as we can possibly make them. We do understand that we are working within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. We are working with the Highway Traffic Act, and we will continue to work to ensure that the penalties there are as strict as possible while we recognize that we also want the support—and I hope you will agree that we need the support—of the federal government to improve our process.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I hear you on that. I'm going to stay, then, in the provincial lane. This bill proposes to get very tough on impaired drivers. I don't think anyone has a problem with that, but how effective is that going to be when this provincial government has a policy allowing impaired drivers to plead down to non-criminal offences under the Highway Traffic Act, avoiding criminal convictions? I think that's a bit of a rhetorical question.

My question is, is the government going to address this? We have raised it in debate that this is a holdover, it's still in the books. Will the government look at that, make that change so that folks charged with impaired are not able to plead down and effectively avoid these penalties?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I do understand your question and your concern, and I have to defer that over to the Attorney General's office and Solicitor General. The processes within individual courts and individual court cases are not something that are under debate today for this particular bill. Our focus is on making sure that we apply the harshest penalties that we can do under our jurisdiction on these matters.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay.

I imagine that my next question, about my bill, Bill 15, which is Fairness for Road Users Act, which feels a little bit like a Conservative piece of legislation in that it effectively throws the book at folks after a collision or after something on the roadway that has caused catastrophic injury or death—but it's sitting in limbo. I'm just going to make my appeal to the parliamentary assistant that—there

will be opportunity at this committee to talk more about it, but if the ministry could take that back and see if we couldn't get that on the books, in keeping with the government's tough-penalty initiatives.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I don't think that's actually a question; is it?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: No, it's not. I'm just taking the opportunity because I have a microphone.

Further to your comments: You had talked about commercial vehicles and, I think, used the term "stringent safety measures," wanting to oversee safer commercial vehicles and our roads as far as they are concerned. I have been meeting with the transportation enforcement officers through the years, hearing, as I'm sure your ministry has, their various concerns. One specific thing that they have been sounding the alarm about is that they do not have the capacity to—I'll say "police," but to look after all of our roads that they're responsible for. They're looking to have more staffing, certainly.

But also, the truck inspection stations—I have asked this government not just for a list of them, but which ones are open or are capable of being open, the truck inspection stations that, rumour has it, aren't calibrated, that couldn't be opened even if the government wanted to.

I'm going to ask you to speak about the truck inspection stations. And if I could ask the ministry to provide something I'd asked for at a previous committee meeting and had asked on an order paper question: Which ones are actually operational? And I don't mean right now, in this moment, but could be open?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, I understand your question and appreciate your concerns. I'll answer that in two parts, if I may.

First off, on the enforcement side, since December 2023, we've actually increased the number of transportation enforcement officers from MTO by 6.5%. Last April, we onboarded 22 new officers. And we continue to hire. I think it's an easy statement, to say that we will continue to improve and ensure that our enforcement is the best we possibly can have.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Mr. Ric Bresee: There have been a lot of inspections, a lot of charges laid, especially up north and near Thunder Bay.

As far as the actual inspection stations—the timing and the delivery of that—I will actually turn to the associate deputy minister, Marcelle Crouse, if you would speak to that.

Ms. Marcelle Crouse: Sure. Thank you.

I don't have the exact number in front of me, but it is an issue that we are working on. There are a few—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Can I ask you to please just state your name for the record? Thank you.

Ms. Marcelle Crouse: Oh, I'm sorry. Sure. Marcelle Crouse. I'm the associate deputy minister of transportation safety division.

It is in issue that we're working on. There are a couple of older stations that need some repair. For example, we're putting a new scale in Hearst right now, as we speak. We have definitely invested in the most strategic stations in terms of—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you. Thank you for the presentation. Thank you for the questions.

We'll move on to the independent member. MPP McMahon, you have five minutes. You may begin.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm just going to follow up on my colleague's questions about these truck inspection stations. You're going to get a list to the member about which ones are operational.

Can you explain to me what all is inspected at a truck inspection station? I don't drive a truck, so I'm not —

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, that's into the technical details. If I may, I would turn to the ADM to provide it.

Ms. Marcelle Crouse: Sure. Our officers work at the inspection stations, but they also work in the field, on patrol. When a truck is brought into a station—first of all, at many of the stations, there's sophisticated screening technology that trucks drive through on their way into the station. That helps the officers know what to look for—if a vehicle is overweight. We have infrared technology that shows, for example, if a wheel is loose, so things like that. At the stations, they are primarily doing mechanical inspections and inspections to determine if, for example, a load is safely secured, or has the driver complied with hours-of-service regulations, things like that. For the officers who are out on patrol, their focus is those things as well, but also on driving infractions, so things like speeding, distracted driving, impaired driving—all the regular causes of collisions.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And then, with this bill or maybe another bill, will you be dealing with the truck depots that we've learned were a serious problem in Caledon?

Mr. Ric Bresee: That's the parking side of things. You're right: That is not addressed in this bill. We will continue to work toward the safety. Safety is a non-partisan issue. Safety is a continuous process for us all to continue to work toward. As these new issues come up, like that you're referring to, we will continue to work with our municipal partners, work with all of our enforcement officers of all types to ensure that we get the best solutions.

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Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great. Thanks.

I'm wondering about enforcement with this bill. It's all great to have increased punishment, but the proof is in the pudding with the enforcement. Do you feel you'll be able to enforce this well? Can you speak to that—

Mr. Ric Bresee: Absolutely. We are continuing to grow the numbers of our transportation enforcement officers. We're continuing to grow the ability and the facilities that we have available to it. One of the things that was just mentioned to me recently was the idea that we now have the ability, at some of our inspection stations, to scan the vehicle in such a way to determine if there is potentially a

stolen vehicle hidden within that truck. So we are addressing many parts of the issues in front of us: stolen vehicles, the auto theft issues that we know are running rampant, along with the inspection to ensure that we have greater safety on our roads by all of these drivers.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. And speaking of auto theft, can you tell us how it would apply to non-Ontario licence plates—

Mr. Ric Bresee: Sorry, how—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: With the licence suspension for auto theft?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, the licence suspension is with regard to what is under the jurisdiction of MTO and under the jurisdiction of this province, so it is Ontario-licensed drivers that would be facing these types of penalties. We have relationships with all of our neighbouring jurisdictions, we continue to work with them to ensure all that information is shared and we try to enforce as best we can.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Who did you work with on this bill? You're saying you worked with MADD—some of these people are coming down—and, I'm assuming, the police.

Mr. Ric Bresee: It's a continuous conversation—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you. We'll now turn to the government members. MPP Pierre.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you, PA Bresee. For your remarks today. Unfortunately, many people across Ontario have felt the devastating impacts of impaired driving in some way.

Earlier this year, just prior to the introduction of the bill, I hosted a group of students from OSAID, which is Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving, who came, met with us and met with the Minister of Transportation, the then Minister of Education and also the Premier to talk about the programming they have in secondary schools across the province of Ontario.

Basically, it's a student-led, peer-to-peer program. Their main objective aligns with the legislation that we're talking about. It's just increasing road safety. This group was founded in 1987. They've been around for quite a while. I first met with them, probably, I'm going to say, back in the early 2000s, but basically, they're groups of high school students that work together to discuss and address issues of impaired driving, and now actually expanding to talk about distracted driving a little bit as well.

And so they hold awareness activities in the schools. They bring in goggles that they share so students can try them out so that they understand exactly how their judgment is impaired if they're using alcohol or drugs and then getting behind the wheel of a car. Some very hands-on learning at a very young age, when students may feel pressure, if they're out at a social event or a party—and just the understanding of the consequences of the decisions that they make and how that impacts their peer group, their families.

All that to say that I just appreciated the opportunity for them to kind of be a part of this conversation. So just

building on that, I'm hoping that you can maybe tell us a bit about how the proposed legislation will go a bit further and protect families and road users who engage in these types of illegal activities. I will say that this is something that the students and the OSAID group were very supportive of in terms of this legislation. Again, thanks to the ministry folks, the staff and the ministers who shared their time to listen to these voices.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Absolutely, and on that topic, it is wonderful to see the youth getting involved in this change of culture. We've certainly seen society shift over the years, and one thing that we are very, very clear on is that there is no place for drunk driving. But that cultural shift is being driven by our youth. It's being driven by the people that will be driving those roads tomorrow, and that is incredibly important. I'm thankful for those groups participating in that and helping to shift that culture.

But our government is proposing new measures to combat alcohol-and-drug-impaired driving: introducing a lifetime suspension for anyone convicted of drunk driving causing death, requiring anyone convicted of impaired driving to install that ignition interlock. All of these are tools—and some of the many tools—that we are using to combat impaired driving and maintain our safety.

We're introducing a zero-tolerance time-limited condition for anyone convicted of impaired driving. That's something actually that those same youths, those young people that are first getting their licences, are quite used to. The new licensing system—I'm not sure exactly when it was brought in—requires that our young people, before the age of 22, I believe it is, have that zero tolerance and they have no drugs or alcohol in their system at any time. So introducing that for people who have proven that they make bad choices, people who have been convicted, will now have that same zero tolerance. That is an excellent move forward to ensure that they don't make those repeated mistakes.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you.

I'll turn it over to my colleague.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to PA Bresee for your lovely deputation this morning on behalf of Minister Sarkaria. It's obviously a very important topic we're discussing this morning around drunk driving and some of the penalties we're proposing as legislation to strengthen those penalties, but also, I know auto theft is very topical in the province of Ontario.

Obviously, when people think of auto theft, they think—and you shared some statistics of auto theft in the GTA. But as you know, as a member from rural Ontario—myself as well—auto theft does unfortunately plague our communities as well. The types of vehicles they may be stealing may be a little different than those in Vaughan. They may be the Ford F-150s or the Dodge Rams, which for those who may not know, now go for over C\$100,000 because of the technology in them—and the costs have gone up obviously, as well as seeing that with inflation. So it's a very valuable purchase, whether it's for a tradesperson or a farm family or simply just someone living in rural Ontario—

because we do need trucks. Winter is coming, everyone, and so the snow will be flying—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Is it?

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's always coming, Triple M.

But I know it is a requirement in my part of the world where we get a lot of snow, and I'm sure in yours as well.

I was just wondering if you could expand a little on your remarks around the escalation of the driver's licence suspensions for vehicle theft. As you mentioned already, we're doing everything we can at the provincial level. Obviously, it would be great if the federal government came to the table with meaningful bail reform, but we'll continue to do our best at the provincial level. So I was just wondering—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Mr. Matthew Rae: —if you could expand on that in one minute.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you very much for the question, and I couldn't agree more. The issue is across the entire province and, yes, those trucks that are very dominant in our rural areas are very, very expensive pieces of equipment and, unfortunately, have become a hot item for the people that are committing these crimes, certainly.

Our province is using all of the tools available. We're encouraging our police; we're investing in our police. I talked about the scanner earlier that is located at our inspection stations. We're providing our police with the funding to ensure that they have all the tools they need to catch the auto thieves.

Along with that, with this legislation, we're increasing the penalties and making sure that people understand that this is not joyriding, this is not just a lark. This is a very serious issue and will have lifetime consequences for the people that choose to practise this.

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The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): We will now turn to the official opposition. MPP French—seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would like to ask you a bit more about e-bikes.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Sorry?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'd like to ask you about e-bikes. Having served as the official opposition critic for transportation for a while now, I've had the opportunity to have many conversations about e-bikes. I'm thinking back to the MOMS Act, when we heard from hundreds of e-bike users who were worried that their e-bikes were going to be deemed illegal. This bill repeals the unproclaimed e-bike provisions of the MOMS Act, or Bill 282, from 2021. The government has signalled it intends to replace those e-bike provisions with new regulations, but hasn't provided details of that, so I guess I want to get into the weeds here.

This bill removes the definition of “power-assisted bicycle” from the Highway Traffic Act, which means e-bikes will now fall under the definition of “motor-assisted bicycle,” with vehicles like mopeds that require class M licences and plates and insurance. My question is, does this government intend to regulate e-bikes similarly to mopeds?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, I thank you for the question and I know that you've done a lot of work in this particular area previously.

We're seeing the technology change and change almost daily. Just on my walk over here to Queen's Park this morning, I certainly saw a number of e-bikes and scooters and all different types of vehicles. Let's face it, 20 years ago, we would not have been having this conversation. These devices didn't exist, and what will exist tomorrow is another question yet. So we're coming back to the idea that we need to create some regulatory definitions on what each of these different types of bikes are.

To come back into more detail on that, I will actually come back again to my assistant deputy minister—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, I've watched this government go through different phases of this e-bike thing. It would seem that the ministry would acknowledge that it didn't quite get it right earlier and that they have undertaken now multiple e-bike consultations.

So, I'm interested in the details about the plans for new e-bike regulations; does the government agree? And as you said, we're seeing lots of different kinds of e-bikes and bikes on the roads. Everyone has an interest in travelling safely, but does the government acknowledge that e-bikes provide a safe and non-emitting alternative to gas-powered cars—that their use should be encouraged? Are we imposing needless red tape? I'm looking for the direction that the government is taking when it comes to e-bikes and regulations.

Mr. Ric Bresee: We want to ensure that options are open for all the different technologies, all the different ridership that is available, while maintaining that safety. Again, safety is number one. We will always ensure that our moves with the technologies are done in the safest way possible.

As far as the specific definitions, again, I will turn to the ADM.

Ms. Marcelle Crouse: First of all, we are very much seized of this issue. We are hoping—once this bill passes, we intend to move forward with regulations pretty quickly. As you said, consultations have been done in the past.

The concern is about the heavier bikes that are throttle-assisted. Right now, they are treated the same as those that are pedal-assisted, and stats show they're clearly more dangerous. So the focus would not be on outlawing certain types of bikes; it's more on requirements associated with different classes. For example, looking at if there should be licences or there should be insurance; if there should be a minimum age for certain types of bikes. Those decisions have not been made yet, but that is what we're working on.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: When can we anticipate that those decisions would be made? Are there still consultations ongoing or is this a matter of, "This is in the works based on the consultations that have happened to this point"?

Ms. Marcelle Crouse: Well, obviously, it's up to the government, but my expectation would be that we would go out with the regulatory registry posting soon after the bill passes, and then move forward fairly quickly.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Do I have a bit of time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Two minutes left.

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

Quick question: We, as a province, have been talking a lot about car theft. Parliamentary assistant, you had mentioned some pretty staggering statistics. Depending on where you live in the province, auto theft looks different. But one of the things that I have been raising—and don't take my word for it—former law enforcement and the insurance industry have been quite concerned that Ontario does not have a VIN verification system, or that whatever VIN verification system might exist is insufficient—if that's an internal audit process, whatever that looks like. I'm not looking for specifics. I'm not hoping this committee will be a "how to steal cars and commit VIN fraud" for those who would watch, but I am not reassured that we have protection.

Ontario is becoming a destination province for would-be car thieves, because other jurisdictions do have that VIN verification step. My question is—we're talking about penalties after the crime.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: But there is an opportunity when the government says that they're doing everything that they can, and yet are not instituting a VIN verification system to protect the VIN registry and avoid VIN fraud in the first place. Why don't we have a VIN verification system and what is the government going to do about it, or are they?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you for the question. First off, I have to say that we know that 80% of the stolen vehicles in this province are actually being shipped somewhere else. It's got nothing to do with the VINs.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I want to stay in the provincial lane on this one.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Understood.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Provincial lane, provincial question.

Mr. Ric Bresee: We are actually working towards new legislation that, if passed, would crack down on auto theft and make streets safer by targeting fraudulent VIN transactions. Our new bill would create a provincial offence for knowingly using a false VIN for vehicle transactions and extend the application of careless driving offences to parking lots etc.

We are continuing to work on these particular files. Again, the technical details of the VIN verification and duplication issues, I will turn to my ADM.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you.

We'll pass the next round. MPP McMahan, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahan: This bill is entitled the Safer Roads and Communities Act. Who do you think falls into that definition of "communities"?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Everyone.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahan: Everyone. So in your mind and in the government's mind, do you feel that all road users are valued equally?

Mr. Ric Bresee: All road users are—well, all Ontarians and all road users, their safety is paramount in all circumstances, yes. And I know where you're going with this.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So there's no hierarchy on road users for this government?

Mr. Ric Bresee: We need to ensure that we're dealing with congestion. We need to ensure that we're dealing with road safety, commercial vehicle road safety, personal vehicle road safety, the auto theft issues, the drunk driving issues—all of them are paramount. You can't rank one over the other.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. That's good to know. I like your language here, when you're mentioning that you're not putting cyclists—you say "cyclists;" I say, "people who cycle"—that you're not putting cyclists at risk and that safety is a non-partisan issue.

In the preamble for the bill, this government is taking action to reduce the number of collisions, injuries and fatalities on Ontario's roads. I'm wondering—so if that's the stance for Bill 197, I'm assuming that will be the stance for Bill 212.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Safety is always paramount, yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Safety is always paramount. Thank you. That's good to know.

In Toronto this year, six people who have been on their bikes have died. They've been killed on the roads. I'm just wondering what this bill does to create safer roads for people who bike.

Mr. Ric Bresee: First off, the people who are committing the infractions, the people who are drunk driving, impaired driving, are the cause of over a third of our fatalities on the roads. We know that. So this bill, specifically, works to crack down on that—and try to reduce that safety. It's a journey. We are continuing to pursue safer roads for everyone.

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The MOMS Act, if you'll recall, does include infractions for driving too close to other vehicles—including cyclists, including pedestrians.

We continue to work to improve road safety for all road users, as you say.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Back to all this—the e-bikes. Honestly, I think we need to do a whole semantics shift here. I think everyone calls these bikes different things. Some people are calling them scooters, and some people are calling them motor-assist, throttle-assist, pedal-assist—and I'm calling them pedal-assist bikes instead of e-bikes. I think people are confused.

You're now looking at creating some different regulations for pedal-assist bikes that could possibly require licences, minimum age, insurance. Is that where you're going with this?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Mr. Ric Bresee: We are looking at the wide range of these alternate vehicles. Again, you're right in the idea that there are a number of different terminologies that are being used. As the technologies evolve, the terminologies evolve. We're seeing so many of these different types of vehicles

being used on our streets, and we need to make sure that we actually have consistent naming and consistent identification of what those vehicles are, however they're being used, and, through these regulations, make decisions about what needs to be licensed, insured, the ages required, all of that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I just would mention, in my last comment, that we don't want anything to be punitive for people who are—I have a letter from a couple in their sixties who have just now purchased pedal-assist bikes, and they bike all over the city. Their doctor is happy. They're in better shape, because you still need to use your own energy to do it and—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you.

We'll move on to the government members for questions. MPP Singh Grewal, you have seven and half minutes.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you, Parliamentary Assistant Bresee, for your presentation today and a lot of the great work that you're doing, along with Minister Sarkaria, to promote road safety across the province.

The question I'm going to be putting forward is going to be more so on the work that we're doing to ensure that our commercial drivers and our commercial road aspect continue to stay safe. We understand how crucial the trucking industry is to Ontario's economy, putting food on our table, ensuring everything moves across the province when it comes to our supply chain, and ensuring goods make it to market in a timely manner, which also speaks to the great work you guys are doing in terms of building highways and roads across the province. Commercial vehicles and large trucks keep our economy moving and should be kept safe.

Are you able to explain further how this proposed legislation improves commercial vehicle safety across the province and what that means for drivers and what that means for the everyday Ontarian?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Let me start with thanking you for all of your work when you were sitting as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation. I'm piggy-backing on some of the efforts that you made, and I greatly appreciate your work on that.

It is a really easy statement: We need the commercial trucking industry to be vibrant. It's also a really easy statement, to say that the vast majority of these truckers, of these vehicles, are compliant. They are following the regulations and are doing the service in the right way, but we need to identify those that aren't. So we've identified three key authorities for the transportation enforcement officers to be able to effectively deliver that commercial vehicle enforcement program. Those drivers, just like all our police officers, will, assuming this bill passes, have the authority, have the ability, to exceed speed limits when it's needed for enforcement purposes. MTO officers are likely starting at a stopped position; in order to catch up to and close the gap with the commercial vehicle that has been identified as a potential problem. They may need to exceed the speed limit. With that, their safety is also very key, so we want to make sure that all the other drivers understand that when they see those flashing lights, when they see that

transportation enforcement officer coming through, they pull over to make sure that their enforcement efforts are actually safe for them and safe for all the drivers on the road.

It is imperative that our transportation enforcement officers have the ability to enforce the rules. We've added, I think, 6.5% more officers to do this task. We are adding new and improving the inspection facilities and the structures available for that.

We will continue to improve the processes for all transportation safety enforcement, specifically around the area of our commercial drivers, because we want them to keep going. We want them to keep delivering the goods, the services, the groceries, everything else that they bring to our communities. It's an important part of our economy, and as I said at the beginning of this, the vast majority of them are doing it 100% correctly. We appreciate their efforts.

We need them, but we need to make sure that those few bad apples are actually addressed as well. This legislation will help to do that.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you very much, and we appreciate the great work you're doing on this file. I just want to pass it over to my colleague, MPP Sandhu.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): MPP Sandhu.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant and the associate deputy minister for appearing before the committee and for your presentation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Minister Sarkaria, yourself and the entire Ministry of Transportation for all your hard work on bringing this bill forward, especially the great work this bill is doing on cracking down on impaired drivers.

Since I was elected in 2018, I've been getting calls from my residents about how concerned and worried they are about the impaired drivers. We hear stories every day in Brampton about these dangerous drivers causing property damage, injuries and sometimes death as well.

There was a tragic incident in Brampton many years ago where a Brampton woman, 36 years old, lost her life, along with her three daughters, aged six, three and one. I would not call it an accident; I would call it a crime because, especially when someone is under the influence of drugs and alcohol, this was an accident that was 100% avoidable.

Thank you for doing the great work in this bill to crack down on impaired drivers. More needs to be done, especially from the federal government, when it comes to bill reforms and the amendment of the Criminal Code.

Can you highlight for the committee how this bill will crack down on impaired drivers?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, the story you tell is horrific. Unfortunately, I think all of us have heard similar stories. Drunk driving, impaired driving anywhere in Ontario needs to be eliminated. It needs to be stopped because you are absolutely right. It's not an accident; it's a crime, and we are treating it as such.

You are right: The federal government needs to step up and do their part. We are using every tool we have to try to influence that.

I really appreciated MPP Pierre's comments about the students that are working to change the culture, that prevent-

ative side of it, so that we don't see this. But for those who make the mistake, we need to send a very clear message: Everyone deserves to return home to their loved ones safely at the end of the day.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Way too many families have had their lives torn apart by the shameful, careless acts of impaired drivers. If passed, this legislation will send that clear message.

A zero-tolerance condition means that, while driving, individuals cannot have any drugs or alcohol in their system as detected by alcohol-screening devices and oral fluid drug-screening devices, respectively. Currently, this condition is usually imposed on the young, novice and commercial drivers and driving instructors. This is a—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you, MPP Bresee, for your presentation this morning.

This committee is now recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The committee recessed from 1200 to 1300.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome back. We will now resume public hearings on Bill 197. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments should go through the Chair. As a reminder, each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation, and after we have heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee. This time for questions will be divided into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the opposition members and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent member.

MADD CANADA

GOOD ROADS

MOTOR VEHICLE RETAILERS
OF ONTARIO

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I will now call on MADD to be the first presenter. Please come forward, and welcome. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Steve Sullivan. I'm the CEO Of MADD Canada. I'll be sharing my time with our legal director, Eric Dumschat, who is joining us virtually.

As many of you know, our mission is to stop impaired driving and to support victims and survivors of this violent crime. We're probably best known for our prevention work, which we're going to talk a little bit about here today, but we take great pride in the services we offer to people who have been impacted by impaired drivers. We offer a national conference every year—we bring hundreds of Canadians from across the country to a location to share their experiences—we do virtual monthly support groups, and we have provincial monuments, including here in

Ontario in the city of Brampton, where we engrave the names of people who have been killed by impaired drivers.

Our prevention work is really important, and I also want to recognize, in our work in trying to make communities safer, our volunteers, both those across this province but also across the country, who spend their evenings and their weekends trying to raise awareness in their communities to make their roads safer.

I want to acknowledge the committee for having us come before you today. We appreciate the opportunity. We did provide a written brief, which I understand is in a shared folder for all members to access. I also want to commend the government for the initiative in Bill 197. We believe that some of the measures taken in this bill will help combat impaired driving and will reduce death and injuries because of those who chose to drive while impaired.

Obviously, we have limited time, so I won't go into every single provision that we support in great detail; the parliamentary assistant did that this morning. I do want to acknowledge that the changes being made to the interlock provisions will truly be made mandatory for the first time in Ontario. We know that people who are suspended, even if they have an interlock order who choose not to get the ignition interlock, some of them will continue to drive, and that means they're driving illegally, they're driving without insurance and sometimes they're driving impaired.

We know from the research that ignition interlocks can help change people's behaviour and it ensures, for the period they have it, that they are driving legally, safely and sober. That's important, I think, for all of us. It brings Ontario in line with other jurisdictions to make sure that people cannot just choose not to have ignition interlock imposed and still get their licences back.

We support the expansion of remedial programs. The lengthening of the licence suspensions, that was one of the recommendations we made in our top-10 list to the province of Ontario. We have a list for all jurisdictions.

Unique to Ontario, as far as we know, is the period of zero tolerance after a driver has completed all of their driving requirements. There may be other jurisdictions that do that; we're not aware of any, so that's a very unique provision. We think it's very positive. It's almost like a graduated release. You don't have your licence, you get it back, you have ignition interlock and then you have a period where you cannot have alcohol or drugs in your system, and we think that will enhance public safety.

In terms of the lifetime suspensions, I don't disagree with anything the parliamentary assistant said today in terms of what people might deserve, and certainly the families that we work with who have lost loved ones would support that. As an organization, though, we try to work on a practical level, and we know that many people will continue to drive even if their licences are suspended, so we would ask the committee to consider, perhaps, after a period of suspension, maybe drivers can get their licence back legally if they install ignition interlocks for extended periods of time—perhaps for the rest of their lives. We just think that will enhance public safety, making sure that if

people are driving, they're doing so in a legal way, while still holding people accountable and recognizing the harm and tragedy that they have caused.

As an organization, we wouldn't be MADD Canada if we were satisfied. No one piece of legislation is going to solve the problem. No one initiative. If that was the case, we would be done; we wouldn't be here talking about this. We always have more ideas and more recommendations.

I'll turn it over to my colleague Eric Dumschat, who can expand on that. I think he's virtually connected.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Mr. Dumschat, are you able to connect with us?

Mr. Sullivan, would you like to continue?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Sure. In our written brief, there are some expansions on some of the extension of alcohol licence suspension, more in terms of the vehicle impoundments to make them consistent.

But the one thing I'll mention briefly while we have an opportunity: About over a decade ago, British Columbia brought in a new way of dealing with impaired driving. Instead of charging impaired drivers with no crashes, no victims, other conditions like no children in the car, they process those impaired drivers administratively, so provincially. They avoid the criminal justice system completely. Those individuals are not charged under the Criminal Code. They are still given swift sanctions, though. They're given vehicle impoundments, licence suspensions, ignition interlocks, remedial programs—all the same types of sanctions you would get, with the exception of a criminal record.

What they found was, that saved their criminal justice system millions of dollars because courts are not involved, courts are not involved. It allowed their police officers to process impaired drivers at roadside. So they're not going back to the station to do the second test and spending hours doing paperwork; they can process cases in an hour or less. And most importantly, what BC found was, they reduced impaired driving deaths and crashes.

All of those things are really positive, and since British Columbia took that approach, we now have seen Manitoba, Alberta, New Brunswick and the Yukon most recently adopt that. It's called immediate roadside suspension.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Some provinces call it something different. But it's an effective way of processing impaired driving cases, holding people accountable, addressing their behaviour, while still imposing important sanctions and making sure that the sanctions are targeted towards impaired driving; at the same time, allowing police officers back out on the road more quickly to respond to 911 calls or to more proactively enforce road safety; and, in this day and age of delays in our criminal justice system, saving the province millions of dollars in court costs.

I'll leave it there. I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): This round of questions will start with the independent member, MPP McMahon.

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Excuse me. We're going to do the presentations first.

I call on Good Roads next. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Thomas Barakat: Good afternoon, committee members. My name is Thomas Barakat, and I'm the manager of public policy and government relations with Good Roads.

I do see a lot of familiar faces here, but for those of you who don't know us, we're a municipal association dedicated to the quality and design of Ontario's road infrastructure. We've been around, actually, since 1894. We represent most of Ontario's municipalities, several First Nations and numerous corporate partners within the municipal transportation and infrastructure sectors. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about Bill 197.

I'd like to begin by commending the government and the Ministry of Transportation for addressing critical road safety issues through this bill. We welcome the focus on combatting impaired driving, strengthening public safety and enhancing commercial vehicle safety standards. These are essential measures in reducing the social and financial toll of road collisions, which MTO estimates costs Ontario between \$12 billion to \$15 billion annually. This commitment to improving road safety is significant and necessary.

While the bill does make meaningful progress, we believe additional enhancements could strengthen it further, better aligning it with the need of Ontario's municipalities and residents. I'm going to outline a few recommendations that we at Good Roads hope that the committee will consider.

The first is increasing penalties for speeding offences. We recommend that Bill 197 include provisions to double fines for speeding offences, introduce escalating sanctions for repeat offenders and empower municipalities to double speeding fines in school zones, as they already have the ability to do in community safety zones. I think a lot of you are aware, speeding fines in Ontario have not kept pace with inflation and are amongst the lowest in Canada. They have not been raised since 2005. According to MTO's data, there has been a 25% increase in speed-related deaths over the past five years. We think that speeding should be treated as seriously as an issue as something like drunk driving. Updating these penalties would restore their deterrent effect and contribute to safer roads, particularly in school areas where children's safety is paramount. These proposals were discussed in previous consultations with the ministry, and we believe that these should have been included in the bill.

The second thing we want to talk about is enhancing penalties for injuries to vulnerable road users. We support the proposed mandatory-minimum licence suspensions for stunt driving, and we would like to see similar measures addressing injuries to pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users—so kind of drawing inspiration from the recent Bill 40, Moving Ontarians Safely Act—that would help ensure that those who endanger the lives of others on our roads face meaningful consequences.

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The third thing we want to mention is expanding the parameters in which automated speed enforcement can be used. Automated speed enforcement, also known as ASE,

has proven effective, but its current deployment parameters are limited. We urge the province to allow its use outside of community safety zones. Many municipalities, particularly those in rural areas with high-speed roads, would benefit from greater flexibility in automated speed enforcement deployment. Just as an example, a lot of rural roads are 80 kilometres an hour or higher, and automated speed enforcement can only be used up to 79 kilometres an hour, so there is a bit of a gap there. We also urge consideration of support mechanisms for smaller municipalities that may struggle with processing ASE tickets. Providing shared resources or streamlining processes could facilitate broader ASE adoption and improve enforcement capabilities. As a knock-on, this could also assist in the deployment of school bus stop-arm cameras, which have not been yet used to their full potential in the province.

One thing I do want to mention is defining e-bike classes for clear regulation. We're pleased to see that proposal to categorize e-bikes into distinct classes. To ensure municipalities can manage these devices effectively, we urge the ministry to expedite the regulation process. It has been talked about since at least 2021. I remember deputing for the MOMS Act a couple of years ago, and I think that was in that legislative package. So it's good, but we just want to see it actually happen, because those clear definitions will give municipalities the flexibility to address emerging issues related to e-bikes on roads and pathways.

Before I wrap up, I would like to mention one more thing: Earlier this year, numerous municipalities declared road safety emergencies, and more recently, over 40 municipalities from all corners of the province have passed resolutions in support of the Good Roads proposed rural road safety program. The sector has put out a call for help, and I believe it's the province's duty to assist them in this challenge.

In conclusion, we do support the government's efforts in Bill 197, and we urge the committee to consider these recommendations to make Ontario's roads even safer. We think this bill is a step in the right direction, but we believe a little bit more needs to be done.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I'll now call the next presenter, Motor Vehicle Retailers of Ontario.

Welcome. Please state your name for Hansard. You may begin.

Mr. Frank Notte: Thank you, Chair and committee members. I'm Frank Notte, the director of government relations for the Motor Vehicle Retailers of Ontario. Since 1908, we have been the voice of Ontario's 1,100 franchised new-car-and-truck retailers, representing every brand and franchise. We are Canada's largest provincial auto retail association. In 2023, 40%—or just under 720,000—of all new cars and trucks sold nationwide were purchased from our members.

Our members don't just sell and service vehicles. According to an economic impact study produced by PwC, our members also generate and support 85,300 jobs in

Ontario, are responsible for one in 20 of all retail jobs in the province and contribute \$13.9 billion in GDP every year.

We're also proud to produce the Canadian International AutoShow, Canada's largest consumer show, every year in Toronto. I'm also proud yet humbled to report that the 2024 auto show broke the all-time attendance record, with 371,559 guests. That's an incredible vote of confidence for Ontario's auto industry.

I'm here to express our association's support for Bill 197, Safer Roads and Communities Act. The MVRO commends Minister Sarkaria for introducing this bill. It builds upon previous bold and targeted measures to fight auto theft that the province has implemented or announced. We are pleased to see new sections created under the Highway Traffic Act that would suspend a driver's licence for those convicted under the Criminal Code. The escalating suspension periods, including a 10-year licence suspension for a first offence, a 15-year suspension for a second offence and a lifetime suspension for a third offence, demonstrate that the province is taking public safety seriously. This is especially true when criminals use assault, violence, intimidation, a weapon, force or other means listed under section 41.0.2, subsection (2), of the bill. We believe subsection (2)(f) is very important as it casts a wide net, targeting those who "attempt, plan or" prepare for the actions I just listed. We have all seen the media reports showing outrageous and frightening home invasions by thieves to steal car keys, violent carjackings in our neighbourhoods and people waking up in the morning to that unnerving realization that their car was stolen right from their driveway.

For auto retailers, auto theft is also problem we want solved. Retailers invest millions of dollars purchasing inventory that is at constant threat of being stolen, despite the strong security measures they implement. Additionally, staff are also at risk. Imagine a salesperson in a car with a perspective buyer only to realize the so-called customer has no intention of buying the car, but stealing it on a test drive.

It is our hope these tough measures will deter would-be thieves from choosing a life of crime and encourage them to become positive contributors to society. Simply put, repeat, dangerous offenders do not deserve the privilege of holding an Ontario driver's licence. They should not be permitted to drive on our roads.

In addition to Bill 197, I want to thank Solicitor General Michael Kerzner for his steadfast support. The \$18 million in the Preventing Auto Thefts Grant to provide surveillance equipment, specialized training for police, new units dedicated to auto theft and other important measures has paid dividends. It's terrific to see regular police press conferences showing them busting up auto theft rings, recovering stolen property and laying charges.

I also want to thank Premier Ford for appointing MPP Graham McGregor as Ontario's first-ever Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform. By singling out these two issues to form an associate ministry, he's underscoring the high priority placed on tackling this issue.

Soon after convening a meeting of key stakeholders, Minister McGregor called for much-needed federal reforms to the bail system with a sense of urgency and purpose that our association endorses, including to require ankle monitors as a condition of bail for serious crimes; restore mandatory-minimum sentencing for serious crimes; and mandate a three-strike rule requiring pre-trial detention for repeat offenders so they are not allowed back on the street to commit more crimes before their day in court.

Statistics show that we have made a dent in reducing auto thefts. The Insurance Bureau of Canada reports auto theft claims in Ontario are down by 16% in the first half of 2024 compared to the same time period in 2023. However, they also report thefts have skyrocketed 291%, comparing the first half of 2014 to the first half of 2024.

If passed, Bill 197 signals Ontario is doing everything it can to make our roads safer and protect a family's second most expense purchase.

Thank you for your time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you to the presenters.

Now we're going to go to the first round of questions. We'll start with independent member MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you for coming in and sharing your experiences and thoughts with us. I have a very short period of time, so I think I'm going to start with some rapid fire for everyone, if that's okay, just to keep you awake.

I think we want to keep roads safe for all road users—for people who drive and people who walk and people who take transit and people who bike—and that we're not pitting people against each other with these names of cyclists versus driver etc. Our parliamentary assistant this morning was mentioning that, that this bill is taking action to reduce the number of collisions, injuries and fatalities on Ontario roads.

I'm just whipping through with you guys, each of you: Do you feel that all road users are valued equally? Starting with Frank.

Mr. Frank Notte: I do.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Yes, and as an organization, we support those who were biking or walking and were hit by impaired drivers.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Mr. Thomas Barakat: Yes, we support any bill that would support all road users. As I mentioned in my remarks, we would like to see some more emphasis placed on vulnerable road users. We know that when anything happens on a road in terms of if there's a crash, an accident, whatever you want to call it—if it happens between a motorist and a vulnerable road user, the vulnerable road user is more than likely going to get seriously hurt or killed. We would like to see some more emphasis on that in this bill.

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

We also spoke this morning about e-bikes, and I just think there should be a colossal overhaul of the semantics used for these vehicles, because everyone refers to them as

different names. I might call something a “scooter” versus a “pedal-assist.” I think pedal-assist bikes get lost in this.

Just with this new—some of you are asking for an expedited process for the definition in regulations. Just your thoughts on pedal-assist bikes: Should they be in with the other motorized bikes? And what kind of regulations, do you think, for those?

Do we want to start with Thomas first instead of Frank?

Mr. Thomas Barakat: From my perspective, or from the perspective of our members—the distinctions are important, but from our perspective, what’s important about it is that they have the ability to regulate which ones can go where. You mentioned pedal-assist and you mentioned motorized—there’s, like, moped-style. Being able to have the ability to precisely determine what can go where on the roadway, that would be very important, because, as you mentioned, some things don’t belong where others are. I think we’ve all experienced that, even as cyclists and pedestrians. Sometimes you feel comfortable walking with some of them next to you, and other times, you’re riding your bike and you say, “Well, this shouldn’t be on the road.” But yes, there should be a difference.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right, you guys have got to shift—30 seconds. Go ahead. No? Okay. Frank?

Mr. Frank Notte: I’ll give it back to you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Sure. All right.

Is there anything else you would like to add in the bill—starting with Frank—that’s not in what you see right now?

Mr. Frank Notte: No. Our focus and our concern with the bill was mainly the auto theft portion of it. I know it’s very targeted. I do want to underscore again that it’s not just for those who convict, it’s those who plan and attempt to do those things. That’s very important to highlight.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. And Steve?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: I think we mentioned the IRP model. It might be bigger than the debate around this committee for this bill, but I think it’s something that, hopefully, the committee has a chance to discuss.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. Okay, I think that’s pretty tight there.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): That about wraps it up.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I’m just hoping that we have the same attitude, this committee, with Bill 212.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Let’s pass it on to the government members. MPP Kanapathi.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to all the presenters for your input. I’d like to add that this morning that we had a good presentation by the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Transportation, MPP Bresee. Thank you. You did a good job.

I’d like to thank the minister for his strong leadership on road safety. If this bill passes, I think it will be revolutionizing road safety in the province of Ontario.

My question to MADD Canada: Steve, thank you for all your wonderful work you do. I have so many cases in Markham. I’m the MPP for Markham–Thornhill. We deal with a lot of diverse community—newcomers and new

Canadians. They are not aware about the rules. Awareness and education—what you are doing is amazing, bringing awareness and education among the new Canadians. We received more than a million Canadians within two years to Ontario, so that means you need to have more engagement, more stakeholder relationships and more communication.

My question to you: Does MADD support opportunity for further strengthening public awareness or an education campaign to complement the message in this bill? If so, what key message should we emphasize?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Thank you for the question. Education is one of our biggest priorities. As you some of you may know, some of you may have seen—you’re a bit younger than I am—our school program when you were in high school. We offer that to thousands of students across the country. We try to raise awareness about the risks and dangers of impaired driving, and I think we’ve been really successful in terms of alcohol-impaired driving. I think most young people understand that. They don’t always make the right decisions, as adults don’t always make the right decisions.

I do think there’s a lot of work to be done in term of drugs, including cannabis. I know that the federal government has done some awareness, I know the provincial government has done some awareness, but I do think there’s more that needs to be done in terms of raising awareness and public service awareness in terms of cannabis and driving. People don’t think it’s as serious as alcohol-impaired driving. They don’t think it impairs their ability to drive, and they also don’t think that police can catch them. So I think awareness around those kinds of things, that your ability is impaired—you might feel different than alcohol, but it’s still impairing—but also that police have the tools to catch you. Every year we see the number of charges around drug-impaired driving increasing because police are better trained and they have better tools. So I think there’s a lot of room for awareness in terms of drug-impaired driving. Obviously, we want to do all types of impaired driving, but I think drug-impaired driving—there’s just a lack of knowledge in young people but also in adults.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I’ll pass it to MPP Sandhu.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): MPP Sandhu.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to all the presenters for being here and for your presentations.

I will direct my questions Good Roads. Thomas, good to see you, as always. First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your entire team for your dedication to improving our municipal roads and infrastructure in general. I had the pleasure of meeting you in my capacity as a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure, and I’m always impressed by the ideas you bring to the table and especially your advocacy regarding the increased penalties for dangerous driving and speeding. This is the bill that addresses that. We’re increasing penalties and also the licence suspensions for dangerous drivers.

What specific measures in the bill does Good Roads believe will have the most significant impact on road safety?

Mr. Thomas Barakat: In terms of the bill, I think, in terms of addressing the stunt driving, that's always important. I know this is something you guys have been working on through this bill and in previous iterations—I mentioned the MOMS Act earlier. So it's nice to see that kind of progression in that you guys are taking stunt driving very, very seriously, and we are very happy to see that. Licence suspensions obviously are a really big step forward in that, so we are happy to see that. I think that's probably going to be one of the bigger impacts of the legislation.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Are there any other measures in the bill that you would like to comment on?

Mr. Thomas Barakat: Yes. I think I covered most of it in my testimony. Like I mentioned, I do think it's a step in the right direction, and I'm pleased to see that the ministry is serious about bringing this forward. I would have liked to have seen some more about more things: just on speeding but not stunt driving. There's that gap in between. So that's where I would see room for improvement.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Are there any specific groups within the municipalities that would benefit most from this bill?

Mr. Thomas Barakat: I think a lot of municipalities, I would—it's always interesting to step back. A lot of us are here, we're in Toronto, but going into rural communities, we hear the most from them about people speeding on rural roads. On a lot of rural roads, there are less people. The infrastructure is a bit simpler, and there's the ability to just speed very, very, very quickly. So I think a lot of municipalities in rural areas would benefit a lot from the things that you put in here in regard to stunt driving in rural Ontario.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Perfect. Thank you so much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Chair. How much time do we have?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One-forty.

Mr. Matthew Rae: One-forty, okay. I will be very brief.

My question is to Frank. Nice to see you again, Frank. As mentioned earlier to the parliamentary assistant, auto theft is obviously in the news a lot. The GTA is in the news a lot, but auto theft obviously affects rural Ontario too. They're just stealing a little different vehicle than they would in Vaughan, for example: Ford F-150s, Dodge Rams, for example. I'm just wondering how the MVRO views the proposal in this bill, specifically on how it will help vehicle owners and auto retailers, as well, which you represent.

Mr. Frank Notte: Absolutely. I think the focus is cars wouldn't be stolen if the bad guys weren't able to do it. I know there's a lot of other things that other stakeholders say, but if we can really make them feel the pain of losing a licence, it might give them a second thought about doing it again.

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That's what I really like about the bill. It's just that continuous progression of making it tougher and tougher to get an Ontario licence, for example, to really give them

a second thought if they want to continue down that path of a life of crime, as opposed to being a positive contributor to society.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): We'll move to the next round. MPP Jennifer French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, and welcome. It's nice to see all of you, and I appreciate your presentations.

I'll start in order of presentations. Mr. Sullivan, welcome and thank you. You had mentioned that the length of licence suspensions was something that you had discussed with the government or, I think you had worded it, was on your top-10 list.

Are there other things on your top-10 list that might have been appropriately included in this bill?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Thank you for the question. I'll ask my colleague Eric Dumschat to expand on this. But one of the things is we're seeing the expansion of the licence suspensions. We also, in our top 10, would have recommended vehicle impoundment extensions as well. But perhaps Eric—I see he's with us now—could add to that.

Mr. Eric Dumschat: Sorry, I couldn't hear anything up until about 10 seconds ago. Steve, could you let me know where we are?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Sorry, the question was: Are there other things in our top 10 that we would have liked to have seen in the bill, or would recommend the bill include?

Mr. Eric Dumschat: Well, the number one thing would be the immediate roadside prohibition program. Steve, did you talk about that at all?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes.

Mr. Eric Dumschat: Okay. I genuinely don't know what happened; I just got sound 10 seconds ago.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay. Then I'll shift and say that I'm sure the committee would be grateful—if you do have a top-10 wish list, we would be happy to have that. I'm sure the minister would be glad for all of us to know what's on that wish list so we can all advocate for it.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: We did provide a written brief that has—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I do have the written brief. I didn't know if those 10 were outlined.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Some of those are, yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you. I'll stick with you. The immediate roadside suspension initiative, or however that is specifically worded depending on jurisdiction, is that something you proposed to this ministry and government? I'd be interested in what they had said, if that is a non-starter or if it's something they're interested in. And also, is that something that law enforcement in the province is also on side with, or is that still in the works?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: We have had discussions with the Attorney General. I don't want to speak for the government in any way, but I thought they were positive discussions. The minister said he would take it under consideration.

In terms of law enforcement, I can tell you that the law enforcement in other provinces who have IRPs are very much in favour of it. Again, I don't want to speak for the

law enforcement in Ontario; I think there are some officers who probably do support it and some who are maybe a little skeptical. But I think if they were to speak to their counterparts in other provinces, they would find the benefits of it outweigh the negatives.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you. I appreciate that. It's something I'll look into because I'm not super familiar with what that could look like in the province.

I would like to ask the Motor Vehicle Retailers of Ontario—thank you, Frank, for your presentation. A quick yes or no: Do you represent members who currently sell power-assisted bicycles that would now, under this, be considered motor-assisted bicycles?

Mr. Frank Notte: We don't, no.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: You don't. Okay. Do you represent folks who sell motor-assisted bicycles, like mopeds, currently? Do you have members—

Mr. Frank Notte: No, we don't.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay, thank you. Then I don't have a further question to that.

All right. I won't quote you, but you had said that cars will be less likely to be stolen if it's not as easy for folks to do it or if they can't do that, and that is something that I have been harping on, and I will call it that, as the critic for transportation. The prevention side, the proactive side of government leadership, I would say, has been slow to get moving, especially when it comes to VIN fraud. We see it rampant, but we don't have a VIN verification system where other provinces do.

I know that we've read the stories that have been reported about dealerships that have sold used vehicles that are stolen, and that obviously puts the buyer in a very tight spot. They can't insure it; they didn't mean to buy a stolen vehicle. I don't know what that's looking like at the dealerships, if this is happening as often as it feels when we read about it.

I'm asking you if you would like to see a preventive initiative that would include, but not be limited to, a VIN verification system to protect the VIN registry in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Frank Notte: I don't know if you are familiar with Carfax. They are a vehicle-history provider.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes.

Mr. Frank Notte: They have started a service—and I'll quote from it so I get it right, and for your benefit as well. They have integrated their clone/paper VIN identification technology into the banking and insurance industries through their VIN scan product. They're making it available to their automobile dealer customers across Canada. I think they are going to roll it out by the end of the year. That is one way to see if a stolen VIN, for example, in another jurisdiction is being registered unknowingly by someone in Ontario.

I think the biggest gap is that there is no federal leadership on getting all the provinces together and merging their systems, so they know that a VIN that is stolen in BC, for example, and registered in Ontario—there is no way for Ontario to know; there is no way for BC to tell Ontario. If there's a national system that's in place, we would want

that better than the current system now. It also will help exporters exporting cars to the States to know if these VINs are fraudulent or not.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, far be it for me to defend the feds, and certainly I know that we are lacking provincially and would not be able to integrate into a federal system as it stands now. So I am hoping that our province is beefing up the system so that we could participate in a national initiative, because Lord knows it is needed. My husband just bought a used vehicle and relied on the Carfax report, and we were crossing our fingers it wasn't stolen, because it's very hard for the average consumer to know now.

Thank you. I think I'm going to be out of time. Do we have a second rotation?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thirty seconds—we have the next set of presenters.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: No—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Excuse me. Another rotation, yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay. I was like, "Well, hold on."

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I'm losing my timing here.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: At that point, I'll say thank you, and for my second one, I'll come at Good Roads. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): So we will move on to independent member MPP McMahon for the next rotation.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a question for everyone, your last kind of rapid-fire. The government is speaking about raising the speed limit on highways. I was just wondering your thoughts, from your expertise on that. Frank, I guess I'll start with you.

Mr. Frank Notte: I think if it makes sense, we should do it. I know back in the 1970s, the limits got lowered to help deal with the oil embargo at the time. That's why limits were lowered and have basically stayed there for my entire life. I think it makes sense that if the highway construction is getting better, if cars are getting safer to travel at higher speeds, then they should be increased to where it makes sense.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, thank you. Steve?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: I don't really have any expertise on it. I guess my advice to any government would be to follow the evidence. If the evidence suggested it's safe to drive and there are other jurisdictions that have evidence to call upon, then that makes sense. But if the evidence suggests that more speed is more dangerous, then I would recommend against, but I don't have any personal expertise.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. And Thomas?

Mr. Thomas Barakat: So when you raise the speed limit, if something happens, if somebody gets into a crash or into an accident, there is a higher chance that someone is going to get more seriously injured than if it was a bit

lower. With that being said, if the highway is designed for a higher speed limit, and if there is proper enforcement of the higher speed limit, then there is something to be said about that.

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If you go to other countries—Sweden, Spain, Australia—they have a lot of enforcement on the highways, and it's not kind of like a gotcha thing; it's like, "We are enforcing the speed limit on this highway. Do not speed here. If you speed here, you're going to get a ticket." If there was something kind of like that, we would probably be in favour of it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, thank you.

Now, just straight to Steve, I think it is: You're mentioning the BC legislation, and I'm wondering if you could elaborate a bit on that. It's new to me, because I don't live there.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Sure. So what BC did was, for drivers who were at a criminal level—had 0.08 BAC, blood alcohol content, in their system—who would normally be charged criminally, they decided to process those cases provincially, so through administrative sanctions, so they avoid the criminal charges, unless there's a collision or injury or high blood alcohol content; there are restrictions. So police are able to process those cases at roadside. They don't have to bring those drivers back to the station to do the evidentiary tests. That means police can process at roadside, the officer is back on the road responding to 911 calls or doing more road safety enforcement. The person gets immediate sanctions. Instead of just having a short licence suspension and a vehicle impoundment, and then you've got to wait months before you go to court, those sanctions are immediate. You lose your licence, your vehicle is impounded, you're doing an ignition interlock, you're doing remedial programs. It all happens right away. There's no—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Sorry, I'll be very quick.

There's no question about—if I go to court in six or eight months, is my case going to be stayed, is it going to be withdrawn, is it going to be pled down to something, am I going to be held accountable at all? We know what the sanctions are, and they're the same for everybody, and they're definite, and they're meaningful to people. You just don't get a criminal record.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And then—two things you said to that: You told me some other municipalities, Manitoba, Yukon—

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Alberta, Manitoba, Yukon and New Brunswick have all adopted that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And New Brunswick—and that there are stats to prove that this works.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: British Columbia has had the longest, so they actually have research that shows they had a drop in impaired driving leading to deaths and injuries. The other provinces are a little bit newer, so they don't have as much history with it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sorry, what kind of drop?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: They had significant drops in injuries and deaths.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh, "significant," okay. And did you bring this up—have you spoken to this government about it?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: We've had a conversation with the Attorney General. I would say it was positive. I think the minister is considering it. I don't want to speak for the government, but it's a discussion we've had.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you.

We're going to move on to the government members, and I'll have MPP Pierre start the questioning.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you, and good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy day to join us here this afternoon and share your perspectives on the proposed legislation.

So my questions are for MADD, so for Steve and for Eric. While we all know the statistics, that one in three fatalities on Ontario's roads are caused by impairment due to alcohol or drugs even though we have some of the safest roads in North America, that statistic is still shocking to me. I wanted to thank you and the MADD organization for the work that you've done tirelessly for decades to change the behaviour around impaired driving. I know we still have a ways to go, but I just think that it's proof positive that we can change behaviour.

At the beginning of your comments, Steve, you talked about some of the services that you provide to people who are impacted by impaired driving, and I'm just hoping that you can maybe take a couple of minutes and share some of the services that MADD provides. And then you also talked about prevention, and so maybe you can just elaborate on some of those strategies for us, as well.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Thank you. My background is in victim services, so it's nice for someone to ask us about our services, because our prevention work is often so prominent. But we have a national conference every year where we bring Canadians who have been injured in crashes, who have lost loved ones, who have lost children, who have lost partners, and we bring them together for a weekend of networking. And the thing they tell us is the most important is that chance to be with each other and share their experiences, to talk to people who know what it's like to lose a child or to lose a partner.

Carolyn Swinson, who the parliamentary assistant talked about, has been to that conference. Carolyn has been with us for 30 years as a volunteer. We have so many others who've been with us for 30, 25 years, and many of them come to us because of their personal experience.

We do a series of virtual online support groups, about six or seven groups every month. We also have chapters that do in-person groups, and again, it's a chance for people to communicate specifically with others who have experienced—if they've been injured. We have people who have lost limbs, people who live with chronic pain, who have significant brain injuries, and they get a chance to talk to others who have those same experiences.

Our Ontario monument in Brampton is only two years old. We have over 130 or 140 names on it. Every year we

add more. We have them in most provinces and hope to have them in all provinces and territories. Carolyn's son and father's names are on there. The Ciasullo family, who we heard about earlier, are on there. The Neville-Lake family is on there, and so many others in Ontario who have been impacted. One of our promises to the people is that we'll never forget their loved ones, and that's really important.

Our prevention work is talking to governments of all stripes, at all levels, to try to enhance public safety. We go into schools, as I mentioned. You talked about OSAID and the important work that they do. We also have a school program where we have trained facilitators go into schools across the country, including here in Ontario. Our public service announcements, our awareness campaigns—right now, we're in the middle of our red ribbon campaign, which is our holiday season, where we just try to encourage folks to celebrate and enjoy each other's company, their families and their loved ones, but to do so safely and to make the right choices.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you for that.

I just wanted to note: Something that you mentioned is that it's not only the impact to the victims—people who have maybe lost a limb or suffered permanent damage—but it's also the impact to their families, their communities, their workplaces, their co-workers, their neighbours, their community organizations and just the overall impact that I think goes just beyond the actual incident, but the broader community.

So I'm just wondering if there are particular aspects of the bill that MADD believes will be especially effective in combatting impaired driving.

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Yes. The ignition interlocks—we had discussions with the former Minister of Transportation, Minister Mulroney, and then, of course, Minister Sarkaria. Those came as a result of us and other community groups speaking to the government about the need to sort of close that loophole with ignition interlocks.

They're very effective. Most other jurisdictions in the country don't allow people to get their licences back without a period. For example, in Quebec, they have over 20,000 people with ignition interlocks; in Ontario, we have less than 6,000. They're an effective way to make sure that people are driving sober, but also to give people a chance to get their kids to school and to get to work, so they can continue to be members of society.

I think the zero-tolerance-measures period—so after you've done all your other sanctions—is a novel idea that we haven't seen before, and it's one that we're going to recommend to other jurisdictions as well. I think it can be really effective in conjunction with those other measures and remedial programs. I think any time we can expand those types of programs to educate people who have made the wrong choices—I think those are all really positive initiatives.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I'll pass it on to MPP Bresee.

Mr. Ric Bresee: First of all, I want to say thank you to all three of you. Good Roads, of course, has been a partner to the municipalities for many, many years. I've been

involved in the organization under my previous roles, and you've done some great work.

To the retailers: Again, we all need cars. We all need those vehicles, and we're glad there's a solid organization that is out there advocating for the retailers, but also for the consumers in that same process. So thank you for being here today—to both of you.

To Steve from MADD: How much can we say that we wonderfully appreciate, tremendously appreciate, all the work that you've done? I know MPP Pierre was talking earlier about the student groups, and we spoke about the change of culture that has taken place.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I think it is in no small measure because of groups like yourself like OSAID, that it is really changing the face of how people treat alcohol and other substances, especially with regard to their driving.

The question I was going to ask you was about the interlock and the zero-tolerance measures—wonderful to hear that you are actually going to carry those forward and take them to other jurisdictions. Obviously, we thought they were a good idea, and we're really glad that you're supporting it and going to be carrying on with that.

Are there any others? I mean, I've been told that we have the strongest measures in the country on these issues. Do you have any other comments or things you wish to add to that?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: First, I'll say we're going to shamelessly take the idea of the zero tolerance and call it our own. But you mentioned earlier, Ontario benefits from some of the safest roads in Ontario, if you look at the data. You pointed out as well, that a third of all the fatalities are impaired-related: alcohol, drugs and/or a combination of—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I'll have to say thank you for your presentation.

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I'll move on to MPP French for the next questioning.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As promised, not to leave Good Roads out: Mr. Barakat, thank you very much for your presentation. I also want to acknowledge and appreciate that you had referenced the ongoing need for government legislation to include consequences when it comes to vulnerable road users. That's a drum that we continue to beat, and as someone who has a piece of legislation kind of lost in limbo, Fairness for Road Users, I'm particularly appreciative of that consideration.

I wanted to say, though: Right now, many impaired drivers can avoid criminal convictions thanks to this government's policy that allows drivers to plead to lesser, non-criminal charges. I'm referring to a policy that was put in place during the pandemic in an effort to relieve court backlogs. The policy continues to remain in place, and that results in even more serious criminal cases being tossed out due to unconstitutional delays and whatnot.

It's something that I had raised with the parliamentary assistant, and I'm poking that button and hoping that the government will look at that policy. Because we can talk

about stiffer penalties, but if people are able on a regular, ongoing basis to ultimately avoid those penalties, I don't see that as a deterrent. So I'm looking for your thoughts.

Mr. Thomas Barakat: Thank you, MPP French. I just wanted to acknowledge Bill 15; we're big supporters of that and hope that it moves forward at some point.

What you're mentioning is not something that we're too, too familiar with, I guess, at Good Roads, but what I would just say to that is this is where we think things like automated speed enforcement is useful, because it's just automatic. You don't have to go to court for it; you get the ticket; you have to pay the fine. We hope the fines are a bit higher. I know there's a lot of backlogs in our courts, so anything that we can do to kind of prevent them from even getting there in the first place I think would be a step in the right direction.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay. I will follow you down that road, then, in terms of the automated speed enforcement. In your presentation, you did talk about the parameters or limitations in municipalities. You had also made the comment that we would need support processes for smaller municipalities. I'll give you the opportunity to maybe expand a bit on that for us.

Mr. Thomas Barakat: Sure. When it comes to camera-based infractions—automated speed enforcement, red-light cameras, school-bus-arm cameras; streetcar cameras, I guess would be one of them—I don't think Toronto has too much of a problem. It needs to go through a processing centre.

Toronto has one, the joint processing centre, and it worked pretty well for a time. But now, when we're trying to expand it to other areas—I mentioned ASE, but school-bus-arm cameras, I think, is where this is like a really big issue. The province actually enabled municipalities to be able to have these on school buses. The framework around that is a bit, I think, dense for a lot of municipalities, and there's a lot of factors at play there. But the big thing we're hearing about that is that it's just hard to get it processed at a processing centre, and these smaller municipalities just don't have the resources to set up their own. That seems to be the big sticking point on that, for an example.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay. Then I think if that is something the government moves forward on, I hope that you'll continue to be a partner in fine-tuning that so that we get it right the first time.

Mr. Thomas Barakat: Of course.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Speaking of “right the first time,” we have had a number of conversations about e-bike classifications, regulations. You remembered to us the MOMS Act. I remember that very definitely, with hundreds of people quite concerned about whether or not their e-bikes would be deemed illegal. So here we are again without regulations, and a lot of folks have questions about this bill removing the definition of “power-assisted bicycle.” E-bikes will now fall under the definition of “motor-assisted bicycle,” which would include mopeds and, obviously, requirements like class M licences, plates and insurance.

You mentioned that you want to see those regulations come forward. We heard from the ADM that that will follow this bill. What are you hoping will be in there—or what are you concerned might problematically be included?

Mr. Thomas Barakat: What we're hoping to be in there is that it just provides clear distinctions between the different types of e-bikes. From the perspective of municipalities that are Good Roads members, they need to have the ability to be able to regulate them as precisely as possible, so having very clear definitions and not grouping things together, I think, is the best way for them, going forward.

In terms of what we would be afraid of, it would be where they just group too many of them in one category, and then it becomes harder to say, “You can't have this in this area.” Also, just kind of it taking too long again—that would be the other concern that we have, because it kind of leaves our members in limbo and keeps it in a bit of a Wild West situation.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Were any of your organizations included in the most recent consultations regarding e-bike classification?

Mr. Thomas Barakat: Yes, I believe so. I don't recall when it was, specifically, but I think we were, yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay.

How am I for time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much.

I will return to MADD and Mr. Sullivan. What I had been discussing with Good Roads at the beginning, about the need for vulnerable-road-user considerations in legislation—and when we think of vulnerable road users, many people think of people who ride bicycles, but we also know that it's folks in wheelchairs, it's police officers at the edge of the road, it's tow truck operators, it's people who interact with our roadways without that vehicle protection. We don't see that in this bill.

Do you have thoughts on something that could be included in future legislation?

Mr. Steve Sullivan: Do you mean in terms of an enhanced penalty if an impaired driver were to strike a vulnerable road user, for example?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I think that drivers who are involved in vulnerable-road-user—I'll say “collisions,” although that doesn't seem like a fair word. If a vulnerable road user is harmed, do you think that they should also face increased consequences? As it stands now, it's a couple-hundred-dollar fine in the event of death or serious injury, but—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I think we're going to have to cut it off here.

Thank you so much to the presenters.

MS. JAMIE STUCKLESS
ARRIVE ALIVE DRIVE SOBER
AVIVA CANADA

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I will now call on the next group of presenters, please. That would be Jamie Stuckless, Arrive Alive Drive Sober, and Aviva Canada.

We're going to start the presentations. I will call on the first presenter, Jamie Stuckless. Welcome. Please state your

name for the Hansard, and you may begin. You have seven minutes.

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: Good afternoon. My name is Jamie Stuckless. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about Bill 197. I've been working and volunteering in the active transportation and mobility sector for over 15 years now, and I'm also a mom who uses an electric bicycle as my main mode of transportation. I'm here today to speak with you about some of the e-bike provisions in this bill, with the hope of ensuring that we can maximize safety and access for e-bikes for all people across the province.

E-bikes are increasingly popular, with sales of e-bikes outpacing the sales of electric vehicles in many areas across North America. Studies from around the world and from right here in Ontario tell us that e-bikes are helping more people cycle longer, further and for more trips, providing affordable, sustainable, healthy and fun recreation and transportation options.

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Having access to an e-bike can help to address common barriers, such as hills, distance, being able to keep up with friends and family, carrying cargo and carrying children. We also know that e-bikes can serve as a mobility aid for people with disabilities by addressing cycling barriers like hills and distance, but also through their design, with adaptive features, such as upright seating, recumbent hand cycles, tandem e-bikes for passengers and more.

What we're seeing across Ontario is that e-bikes are being used more and more by people, including people who have typically experienced barriers to riding a bicycle, such as seniors, women, food delivery workers and people with disabilities. It's been well over a decade since meaningful updates were made to how we regulate e-bikes in Ontario, so I'm glad to see the province taking action on some much-needed updates. Not only have we seen a huge growth in e-bike usage during this time, we've also seen a lot of updates to the types and styles of e-bikes that are out there, many of which don't neatly fit into our old definitions.

Ontario has been using the federal definition of e-bikes, also known officially as power-assisted bicycles, which was repealed in 2021, but grandfathered in until we pass our own, new definitions. This old federal definition was broad enough to include both bicycles with power assist, which you may think of as bicycle-style e-bikes, as well as low-speed electric motorcycles, which are often referred to as mopeds. This kind of jumble really created a lot of confusion about what types of vehicles are permitted where, and what exactly even is an e-bike.

For years, many local and provincial partners had called on the federal government to more clearly distinguish between different types of e-bikes, so I'm glad to hear that the province is now seeking to create different classes within this bill. This is an essential step that will help municipalities and trail operators create clearer and safer rules for everyone.

Through Bill 197, the province seeks to create regulatory-making powers that would allow e-bikes to be categorized into distinct classes. To do this, Bill 197 is repealing

the definition of power-assisted bicycles. I've not been able to get official confirmation on this, but my understanding is that this would then see e-bikes fall under the motor-assisted bicycles category, as I heard referenced earlier by the MPP, and then further categorized from there through regulations. So if that's not actually the intended approach, I'm glad for your clarifications.

Regardless, I wanted to bring up a few things today that I hope are prioritized, moving forward. First, I'd like to address how Ontario e-bike rules impact families, caregivers and people wishing to use their e-bikes with children under 16 years of age. While a minimum age for e-bike operators is standard, Ontario is currently the only jurisdiction that I am aware of in Canada that also has a minimum age requirement for e-bike passengers as well. Currently, no one under 16 years of age is permitted on an e-bike.

This ban on child e-bike passengers is extremely restrictive to families and caregivers. It is not evidence-based or justified through safety research, or through the experiences of people in other jurisdictions in Canada or around the world. Although not enacted, the 2021 MOMS Act can serve as a resource on this issue, including its proposed repeal of the age requirement for passengers, which I fully supported.

If e-bikes are in fact to be categorized as motor-assisted bicycles as part of Bill 197, the language in this bill currently maintains this prohibition on child passengers under 16 years of age for motor-assisted bicycles. Not only that, but under the Highway Traffic Act, motor-assisted bicycles are not allowed to carry passengers of any age.

I think you'll see before you some sample photos that I printed out that I wanted to share of some of the e-bike users that would not be permitted with these requirements. These include the electric trikes that are used in the globally popular Cycling Without Age program to help seniors get out on bikes and reduce social isolation. It also includes popular electric cargo e-bikes with child seats, and the use of child seats in trailers on e-bikes of any kind. I don't believe that it is the intention of this bill to ban or continue to ban these users, but I am worried that it might be the outcome.

In the written correspondence for this bill, the committee will hear from a Kingston resident who has recently been pulled over for carrying their child on their e-bike to daycare with a purpose-built child-carrying seat. They can no longer use this affordable and fun way of getting to daycare.

As the mom of a toddler who also relies on her e-bike as my mode of transportation, I also urge you to reconsider this and ensure that neither Bill 197, nor any future regulatory categories, perpetuate this ban on families using e-bikes.

Safety is, of course, of utmost importance, but fortunately, child seats have undergone rigorous testing and can be used to safely carry children. If I could propose an amendment, we don't have to look very far to other places in Canada that say that passengers or children of any age can ride on e-bikes as long as there is a purpose-built seat for them.

The second part I wanted to quickly mention is just about how this proposed change could impact where e-bikes are permitted to ride. Previously, e-bikes were categorized as

bicycles and could ride, by default, anywhere that bicycles were permitted. I'd like to ensure that, moving forward, certain categories of e-bikes continue to be permitted where bicycles are by default, without municipalities having to go through the process of actively permitting them in places like bike lanes and multi-use paths.

Lastly, as we move through this process of updating the laws, I wanted to make sure that we are in correspondence with what our neighbours are doing. I can envision a scenario where a resident of Ottawa buys an e-bike and rides it across the bridge in the morning to Gatineau, Quebec, not knowing that their e-bike inadvertently becomes illegal as they're biking on their trip to work because Ontario and Quebec have decided to adapt different categories. This would also be confusing for people who move to Ontario or who are cycle tourists here.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you so much for your presentation.

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: Thank you for your time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I'll now call on Arrive Alive Drive Sober. Please state your name for the Hansard, and you may begin.

Ms. Anne Leonard: Anne Leonard.

I want to say thank you very much for inviting us to share in the discussions that you're having today about Bill 197. I apologize that I didn't include any pictures in my presentation, because we have some awesome pictures out there.

I am the current volunteer president and former executive director of Arrive Alive Drive Sober. Our charity has operated for more than 35 years, providing leadership, programs and messaging to eliminate impaired driving. We use themes like Choose Your Ride. We run the Operation Lookout program in Ontario and beyond. We've historically hosted an event called Drive Straight, but given the changes to marijuana legislation over the years, we use it for some other messaging on occasion. We meet with people in communities across Ontario and share our resources and information to prevent injuries and save lives on our roads.

Our members and stakeholders are made up of dedicated professionals and volunteers who guide our efforts, along with our volunteer board. We partner with community groups, police services, public health, schools, businesses, governments etc. We share materials across Ontario and beyond every year, and we earn, with our PSAs—similar to MADD Canada—about \$30 million in donated services from media, television and radio combined. In the past, Ontario government surveys have found that our slogan and messaging was recognized by four out of five Ontarians.

I have a bit here that I'm going to gloss over a little bit. We do a lot of campaigning—you've probably heard our messaging. We've done Choose Your Ride with paramedics. We've done safe boating messaging. We sometimes think out of the box with help from—Queen's University one year did a campaign with us and created the first Arrive Alive app. It was the first app to help you choose your ride to get home safely. Rethink Canada has done several programs

with us over the years—wrecked-car coasters were one of them and Drunk Radio was another one.

We have been at the forefront of raising awareness about the dangers of driving high. We started campaigning against driving high—in 2012, I think we did a spot with the RCMP and Ottawa police and have continued to raise awareness through high school videos, which we share across Ontario and then sometimes across Canada as well.

We have had, in the first 25 years of operating—we've been operating since about 1988. In the first 25 years, those were hard times. I personally have been involved since 1981, so I've seen a lot of changes, from literally what was a slap on the wrist—it irks me today when I hear people say, "Oh, it's a slap on the wrist." Not at all. It's not a slap on the wrist and most people, when they're caught and convicted, are very unhappy about the whole thing.

Anyway, we do watch statistics, and your ORSAR numbers seem to be showing some struggles to continue going down. We commend the work of this government for the changes through Bill 197. We would be pleased to see the changes to longer licence suspensions, longer suspensions for the warn range, longer look-back periods and mandatory use of ignition interlock as part of a reinstatement process. I personally put an interlock device in my vehicle to experience what it was like back in 2001 when that legislation first passed in Ontario, and it's a very effective tool to keep you from driving impaired. I'm not saying I would have done that; I just really needed to know how the equipment worked, and it was a good experience. My kids couldn't start the car—I'm just kidding.

1410

Anyway, we agree with the longer suspensions and the look-back periods and interlock. I thank you for taking steps to ensure that convicted impaired drivers have that experience going forward. When you look at the numbers, the idea that you can drive impaired many times and not be caught, you can be caught and not convicted—so if you're convicted and then you don't really have to pay much—and I shouldn't say "much" because you do have to have the reality—you have your back-on-track, and you either have the interlock or you sit out the period, and your insurance rates will go through the roof and all sorts of other egregious consequences.

I'll just skip on to next year. In 2025, Arrive Alive Drive Sober will be producing a series of PSAs to include the opportunities that passengers have to pursue, inform and achieve safe, sober driving. We'll also be working on projects, as possible, to address the safe, responsible sale of beer and wine in convenience stores and any other point-of-sale opportunities with retailers and/or service of alcohol.

In conclusion, we support the government's efforts to create stronger legislation. It's with tough legislation that we can continue to see alcohol-impaired-driving incidents and fatalities—and they're both important to us—decrease in Ontario. Bill 197 can be a part of that. Effective public education and awareness will also help.

In our 35-plus years of operating, we have met with and worked with victims, police, students and more, and we've

learned two critical truths: that impaired driving can be prevented and that it cannot be taken back. So we appreciate anything we can do that helps prevent it.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): You have a minute and 20 seconds if you'd like to add anything else.

Ms. Anne Leonard: I made some notes about our wish list.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): You have a minute and 18 seconds.

Ms. Anne Leonard: We are home to a program called Operation Lookout, which was trademarked around 2001. There are other reporting programs, but Operation Lookout is a program that invites all road users to report an impaired driver as a crime in progress. We get calls from people saying, "Oh, my neighbour drives drunk. What can I do?" The truth is, you can't do a lot unless they're actually driving. We will mail information to their neighbour anonymously or to their workplace—the last place that called us was probably Quaker's in Peterborough or somewhere—and hydro places and different places.

If our legislation won't stop you from driving impaired, it's very helpful if people will call and report you and get you off the road before you crash; afterwards is no good.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you for your presentation.

I'll now call on Aviva Canada. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin your presentation for seven minutes.

Ms. Jamie Lee: Hi. I'm Jamie Lee. I lead the fraud and financial crime team at Aviva Canada. I'm joined by—do you want to introduce yourself?

Mr. Petros Yannakis: Hi. I'm Petros Yannakis. I'm the national claims counsel at Aviva.

Ms. Jamie Lee: Aviva is the second-largest property and casualty insurer in Canada. We insure cars, homes and businesses across Canada. In Ontario, we approximately insure 900,000 cars.

Road safety is very important to our customers and that's why we're here today, to support Bill 197. I will focus my remarks on the auto theft provisions, but please note that Aviva supports increased penalties for high-risk and impaired driving.

The auto theft epidemic in Canada has been well documented by media. It has impacted our business significantly, as 2023 was a record year for auto theft. Almost 6,000 Aviva customers had their vehicles stolen nationally, and Aviva paid out close to \$180 million in respect of these thefts. Some 77% of these thefts were in Ontario and heavily concentrated in the GTA area. There was a sharp increase in thefts leading up to 2023, and the cost of these thefts has more than doubled from 2019.

In 2024, we have seen national theft numbers drop by 17% and Ontario dropped by 15%, but we were still well above the 2019 benchmark, and there is more to do.

Worrying trends that we have also seen relating to auto theft include customers being targeted through carjackings and break-and-enters into their homes. We've also identified \$19 million of re-VINed vehicles over the last two years. This is where customers may be mis-sold a stolen vehicle

or where criminals are actually reinsuring the stolen vehicles and then using them for criminal purposes. In 2019, we had few and far between of these cases. In addition, we have also, unfortunately, seen people take advantage of this situation and we've seen an increase in fraudulent claims.

We believe that the decline in theft numbers in 2024 is due to various organizations working together, and we would like to thank the government for its leadership on this issue. The province has played a key role in shining a spotlight on this issue and galvanizing people to act. Ontario's investment in law enforcement has been a critical reason for the decline in auto theft. My team works very closely with law enforcement and supports them with different resources for investigations, and we are very pleased to see the increased number of arrests.

Sharing intelligence and data has really helped law enforcement and the CBSA focus their efforts on the criminal organizations, and we would like to see this continue. Increased CBSA resources has also made a difference at the ports, and the media has played an important role in educating Ontarians about the issues.

As an insurer, we have taken various steps to tackle this problem. Aviva has paid for the installation of tracking devices in vehicles of high-risk customers, and, to date, we have installed 19,000 units in vehicles. This has helped us recover \$4.4 million in vehicles to date.

We have also set up a global recovery team, which we never needed prior to vehicle theft exploding in 2023. This helps us to try and recover customers' vehicles and funds. To date, we have identified \$12 million of vehicles overseas, \$3 million of which we have actually managed to recover.

Lastly, we are also working with auto manufacturers to continue to develop a mutual understanding of how vehicles are stolen and possible prevention methods. However, there is a lot more to be done. Theft numbers are still too high. The measures proposed in Bill 197 will help. Increased penalties with the revocation of driver's licences should act as a deterrent. We appreciate that the province of Ontario has legal and constitutional limitations and they cannot amend the Criminal Code, which we would be in preference of.

I would like to close by thanking the government for its ongoing efforts to tackle auto theft.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I do have 2.5 minutes left if you'd like to add anything else to your presentation. No? Okay.

We'll move on to the round of questioning. This round will start with the government members. MPP Bresee.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, thank you to all of you for presenting today. If I may, I'll start with you, Ms. Leonard, with Arrive Alive. Again, I very specifically want to thank you for all the efforts that you personally and that your organization have put in for many, many years.

I said it earlier, that I believe the culture around drinking and driving has been changed dramatically by organizations such as yourselves, MADD Canada and a number of organizations. I was especially pleased to hear about some student groups; that young people are taking on that chal-

allenge and making those changes to culture. I very much appreciate your efforts to that end.

I do have a question for you, and that is, one of the pieces—the idea of prevention is obviously key, and one of the pieces that we have done in this particular piece of legislation is to try to prevent repeat offenders with the use of interlock and with the use of the zero-tolerance rules after conviction. Can you give us your comments on those particular pieces?

Ms. Anne Leonard: Big fan on interlock as a condition to drive. There are some states in the US that have, I think—maybe I'm remembering the wrong legislation. It might have been a different—it's a condition that you agree to when you sign up and get your driver's licence. I might be thinking of just that you agree to be tested for something—43 years; I don't remember it all. Sorry. But, yes, interlock is one of the best things.

Convicted impaired drivers in Ontario also complete the Back on Track program, which is two different streams. You have a Back on Track light for people who have their third-time warn range—I'm not sure if that has changed at all over the years.

One of our challenges with raising awareness about our tough measures is that they're so confusing. It's so lengthy, and then sometimes—quelquefois on le veut dans les deux langues and then you're really stumped, you know? So it's a lot to parlay to people, that we have this and we have a summary or indictable, and you can actually have your vehicle forfeited, since 2008, on your third conviction if it's summary conviction or whatever, and I don't think anybody out there knows that.

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We tried to advertise years ago—and when I say “advertise,” no, it's not with money—how much it would cost you. So, one simple conviction—you don't hit anybody, nothing tricky—will cost you at least \$26,000 if you want to drive again. And that figure might even be up now with increases to insurance and whatever, but you pay for the interlock, you pay for the Back on Track, you have insurance increase a lot. But I don't think people realize that.

At our conference two or three weeks ago, one of the gals who runs the Back on Track Program outside of the greater Toronto area said people who come to her, convicted impaired drivers who are now taking this program, they're really befuddled. They had no idea that it was all this stuff. That's why when I hear in the media, “Oh, it's a slap on the wrist”—no. I mean, some of our sentences of “impaired, caused harm”—jail time is too light, most of them, but we do have really significant consequences.

We could educate more through driving schools, maybe through the DriveTest centres, high schools. In our PSAs, of course, we usually talk about prevention more than the consequences, but we do sometimes talk about the consequences too. Some of our drug spots highlight that.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you, and again, noting that with this act we are attempting to increase those consequences and make sure that people are aware of that.

You did mention the increased cost to insurance, so with that I'll segue over to Aviva and—

Ms. Anne Leonard: I'm not complaining, just pointing out.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I had to use it; sorry.

And to both of you, again, thank you for coming in and presenting before us today. I really appreciated your comments in the early part of your presentation, with the idea that we are addressing the high-risk driving activities, stunt driving and such like, with this. Most of your presentation was on auto theft, and again, I appreciate the efforts that your organizations are taking to work with the government, to work with police enforcement and all that.

Can you tell me what you think is the most effective part of the increase in the investment in our police officers, the increase in the penalties and the licence suspensions etc. with this piece of legislation? Your own activities: What do you think are the most important parts, or how they work together?

Ms. Jamie Lee: Actually, I think it is working together. I really don't think there's one thing that will tackle this issue, and it's about all of the organizations coming together, working with government and actually tackling this issue. That's part of—the resources that we've had with law enforcement, we've seen that increase in arrests. I think it about us all working together at this point.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): You have about two minutes, seven seconds.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Okay.

I'm going to come to, if I may, Ms. Stuckless. Again, thank you for your presentation on e-bikes. As much as I think I've learned a lot about them, I keep on learning more and more about them, and these types of presentations certainly help. I certainly see a lot of different types of e-bikes every day on the streets here when I'm in Toronto.

Ultimately—and I've said this many times; I said it in my presentation earlier—safety is, of course, number one, and it will always be number one for us. We have not moved far enough yet on the categorization, the definitions, around the various types of e-bikes. So—

Interjection.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, I think I'm running out of time fairly quickly here—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute and 20 seconds.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I would like you to continue to consult with us, continue to work with us at MTO to ensure—but could you speak briefly about some of your ideas specifically on how we can best start to develop those regulations?

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: Just very quickly, with the time remaining: I would say our neighbours to the south in the United States have adopted a three-class system that could potentially be replicated here. It is absolutely not perfect, but I would say that what we develop here will probably also have some issues and mistakes and things to look at—so maybe building off of what already exists instead trying to start something new from scratch.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Don't reinvent the bicycle.

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: Yes.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): We'll move to MPP French, please.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, everyone, for your presentations. I have lots of thoughts and questions. I think I'll perhaps go in order of those presentations.

Ms. Stuckless, thank you. Your thoughtful handout with the pictures takes me right back to the MOMS Act, when all of us were getting hundreds of emails with mom-and-passenger photos of cargo bikes and whatnot. During that time, the consultation was flawed, and the resulting legislation was problematic; the regulations have not been proclaimed, as you referenced, and now they're being repealed. We had heard from the ADM earlier that it has been an ongoing process and that we hopefully will look forward to those regulations soon.

Thank you for raising the specifics, though, about the age restrictions of passengers, or also these power-assisted bicycles now going to be deemed motor-assisted bicycles—that would mean that they couldn't have passengers at all, which I think was your point and concern. All of those regulations are unproclaimed, but they're being repealed by this bill. So if you would like to elaborate on that, or if there are other provisions that you're concerned are being repealed, even though they weren't proclaimed, that you want to highlight for this committee today.

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: Yes, I was really happy when the MOMS Act was doing things like addressing this restriction on the age of passengers and I would like to see that carried forward. At the time of the MOMS Act, I also delegated to committee and mentioned that our other neighbours, like the United States, have a widely adopted three-class system that is already in use with industry. I think it's adopted in over 40 states across the United States, recommending that MTO look to that. Again, I know it is not perfect, but I think some of its issues are better known than if we were to start from scratch. I think that it is important to do that because we are neighbours with other jurisdictions that could—I think Ontario could be a real leader and put something forward, and I think whatever Ontario puts forward, other provinces will look to—so really putting a lot of thought into that.

One thing that I did appreciate in the MOMS Act was some of the language around bicycle-style e-bikes; I thought that was very clear. As much as the three-class system exists in the United States and I think that should be a model we look at, the average user isn't going to know what a class 1, class 2, class 3 is. So maybe applying some of the language that the MOMS Act did have—I liked that terminology, "bicycle-style e-bike." I know a few jurisdictions like Durham region have actually adopted that preemptively, thinking that the province was going to be moving forward with that as well.

There were some good things happening in the MOMS Act that I think could be moved forward. I think some of the problematic areas that you reference were more around just not necessarily recognizing some of the differences that exist in e-bikes and being overly prescriptive about things like throttle and design and wheel size. There's a lot

of adaptive e-bikes out there and family-style cargo bikes; it's a really wide market, and I think it's important to just make sure that we're not inadvertently banning some of these bicycles—so bringing forward some of the good stuff that was in there and addressing some of the issues that were raised.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I really appreciate that, and I'm hoping that there are some ministry staff who are watching who are taking notes and will perhaps refer to your earlier presentations for reference. All of us have talked about the changing e-bikes out there and we do know that it requires careful attention not to create red tape for those who would choose to travel by e-bike. Thank you very much.

Was there anything else that you weren't able to include in your presentation? I feel like you got cut off. Was there a last line or are you fine?

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: No, my last line was just to thank everyone for the opportunity, so—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: You are more than welcome. Thank you.

How am I for time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Two fifty-four.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Let's see what I can do.

Ms. Leonard, thank you very much for your presentation. I want to thank you for your important work as an organization and certainly as someone who has a lot of messages in my head that I've learned either when I was a student or just in the community. The average person drives safely and makes good choices, but I really appreciate your continued advocacy, especially—we'll be interested to see that next campaign or the next chapter, when you were talking about passenger responsibility or neighbour opportunities, that sort of thing.

1430

You certainly talked about being pleased to see longer licence suspensions, mandatory interlock systems to get the licence back. I am hopeful that initiatives like what the government is putting forward will be sufficient deterrents. I don't think there's anything that's going to be enough of a deterrent. We do need the community awareness, as well as the penalty after the crime, but penalties after the crime don't prevent. Is there anything else that you would like to see or to have the committee consider for ways to create deterrents and prevent?

Ms. Anne Leonard: Well, we like enforcement. We have to know that we'll be caught; otherwise, we try to get away with stuff. That's human nature. We have police who speak at our conferences, and they say, "People lie to us"—shocking.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Anne Leonard: Okay.

Anyway, please maintain enforcement, maintain the RIDE—and I get it, that some of this stuff gets boring.

Years ago, a lady I volunteered with said, "Anne, we haven't had a new victim here in Peterborough in years, and we really need"—that's a horrible concept: that we need someone to be hurt before we care.

So I plead and I—I don't beg, but I'd be grateful if—as unsexy as it might get, we still have to enforce, we still have to care, we still have to raise awareness.

We work with several people at the Minister of Transportation's office, your road safety people. You changed your name—I know what it used to be; I don't know what it is now. They do great work.

If I get a chance before I leave today, I'm going to pass around a little Girl Guide badge for road safety that one of your road safety planners created with the Girl Guides of Canada. It's very cool. I tried to do it myself about 20 years ago and failed—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you so much for your conclusion to that.

MPP McMahon, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: As a former Brownie, I would really be curious about that badge, so I'll talk to you afterwards.

Thank you, all, for coming in, taking the time, and sharing your vast experience and knowledge with us.

This morning, the parliamentary assistant was mentioning that road safety is a non-partisan issue. In the preamble, we see in Bill 197 that the government is taking action to reduce the number of collisions, injuries and fatalities on Ontario's roads, and that we don't want to be putting people at risk—people who bike, people who drive, people who walk, people who take transit.

I'm just wondering, as I asked the parliamentary assistant—would you say that all road users should be valued equally? We'll start with Aviva.

Mr. Petros Yannakis: I'm not sure I understand the question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Just if there's a hierarchy of road users, in your experience—it's a yes or no.

Mr. Petros Yannakis: There's no hierarchy of road users. But licensing is a privilege. So the deterrent effect of Bill 197, of revoking licences for punishment of the theft of crime, is an effective thing.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Jamie?

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: In terms of valuing road users, I think everyone, no matter how you are getting around, deserves to arrive home safely, and it's incumbent upon us to make sure that happens. So I think, yes, everyone needs to be valued equally.

In terms of a hierarchy of users, I do know that in planning and in many municipalities, they have adopted transportation plans that do have a hierarchy in terms of prioritization, of making sure that, first and foremost, pedestrians are taken care of on a complete street, and then more vulnerable road users, people with disabilities, people cycling, people taking transit, and then that the vehicle planning should be at the bottom of the hierarchy. So, some municipalities have adopted a hierarchy, but in terms of valuing road users, everyone deserves to arrive home safely and alive to their loved ones.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

Is it Anne?

Ms. Anne Leonard: Yep. I think that everyone should be allowed and—I don't know if we're entitled to it, but we sure want it. We should be able to feel safe on our roads, right? But it's a team effort, right?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great. Thank you. Yes. I'm hoping that that applies with Bill 212 next week, as well.

So, to Aviva: You're mentioning—it's pretty unbelievable stats about auto theft and all the great measures you're trying to do with your organization for recovery. You have to be Sherlock Holmes, detectives or something, to find all these, especially if they're overseas. You were mentioning possible prevention measures. Could you elaborate on those specifically—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: —in one minute?

Ms. Jamie Lee: Yes, I think, maybe, just because of the timing, we're happy to have a meeting to talk about more of the prevention measures that we think could be put in place. Again, I think it is about us all working together, using data and information that we have available. But, again, more than happy to have a meeting to share more insights.

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

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Forty-two seconds left.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, I have very in-depth questions. I'm not sure if we can get started and then tease her. Stay tuned, Jamie.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Okay.

We'll move on to the government. MPP Kanapathi.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to all the presenters for coming out and giving their input. Thank you so much. Thank you for your knowledge and passion for fighting against heinous crimes. A lot of—eradicating impaired driving is not easy.

My question to Arrive Alive and Anne: Thank you for your passion. I know Arrive Alive has been a champion when it comes to advocacy against impaired driving. You have been on this mission for 35 years. Congratulations—and that shows your record.

Ontario is seeing a staggering increase in numbers in impaired driving. The statistics show that one in three fatalities on Ontario roads involves impaired driving by alcohol or drugs. That is troubling. That is big numbers. They're big, staggering numbers. As a government, we have the responsibility to combat against impaired driving. That's why we are taking the toughest measures, toughest legislation in the history of Ontario. I have to—thank you, to our government. We have a PA here; he did the presentation this morning. And I have to—thank you to Minister Sarkaria for this leadership in taking action to save so many lives in Ontario, especially on the road.

So my question to you—I know your advocacy. What specific impact does Arrive Alive foresee this bill having on reducing impaired driving and improving road safety?

Ms. Anne Leonard: What specifically—sorry?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Yes, specifically reducing—the impact Arrive Alive foresees this bill having on reducing impaired driving and improving road safety.

Ms. Anne Leonard: Well, it's a collection of things that we've already mentioned. I would add also, we want to make sure that beer and wine are served and sold responsibly, going forward. I guess a little asterisk on that: that when we do bring in legislative changes, like we have—it's not in the bill, but with convenience stores—you want to keep a close eye on that kind of thing, and the same thing with the legalization of cannabis several years back. It's important to keep a close eye on what happens with the rollout of these changes.

I think it's critical to audit everything that's going on, whether it's—we have something going on right now, and it's not my area of expertise, but it was mentioned at our conference. It's one of the nitty-gritty things in law, that if I plead down when I'm charged with impaired driving, I might get a probationary sentence and it might include certain things, and I might not comply with those things, and I might not be caught. So it's kind of enforcing our legislation, making sure that what we want to see done gets done so that drivers actually comply and whatever.

1440

I'd like to see education—you mentioned a students' group earlier, and I don't know if it was OSAID at the meeting today—

Interjection.

Ms. Anne Leonard: Okay, good. That's wonderful. We've worked with Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving from day one; we've spoken at their conferences. Matt Evans is their coordinator, and Matt and I go way back.

So things like that—education around driving. But also, that's why we're looking at more concern around passengers. Not every young person gets their driver's licence these days, so I think it's just as critical to educate passengers.

The only other thing that we've noticed—and it's not necessarily an impaired driving thing, but over the last couple of years, looking at some of the ORSAR data—is an increase in motorcycle harm. I'd encourage people in your office who study all your data, like Matthew Fawcett or whomever studies your data, to keep an eye on that. I wonder if it's like an increased—years ago, we saw an increased use in off-road vehicles, and then we saw an increase in harm. That was probably going back 15 years. Not surprisingly, you'd see more off-road vehicles and then you'd see more harm.

A couple of years back with the COVID lockdown and all that, you would see people partying in different groups, so maybe more impaired boating was going on. So there can be different strains or issues to track.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: We know that Arrive Alive has been engaging with the communities and victim families for so many years. Tell me about what feedback Arrive Alive has received from the affected communities, victims or their families that you believe is relevant to this bill.

Ms. Anne Leonard: Two things: The first thing is that you can't take it back. When the police officer comes to your door with their bad news, all of that that happens after that moment—the hospitals, the morgue, the funeral—you can't take it back, and it lasts forever for a victim. When we lose a loved one, you might call me every day for a month, and then every week for whatever, but the deal is this: A year down the road, I still have lost my loved one, and you've probably gotten busy with your baseball tournament and your life. And that's good, but for victims, it never goes away. It never leaves you. My heart goes out to Jennifer Neville-Lake for what she's lost.

The other thing—did I do that again? I forgot the other thing. You can't take back—and I forgot the other thing. I'm really good at that now.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you so much, Anne.

I have to thank Aviva for coming. Aviva are Markham guys; I'm the Markham MPP. You are a big employer in Markham.

I'll pass it over to Matthew.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining. MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: My question is for Aviva, actually. Really quickly, are there any complementary measures, along with if the bill is passed, that you see from your side—potentially public awareness measures that could complement the bill, if it's passed?

Ms. Jamie Lee: For vehicle theft, specifically?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes, vehicle theft. Sorry.

Ms. Jamie Lee: Sorry. I just wanted to check.

For vehicle theft, definitely, public awareness has been huge. That has been part of how we've got the uptick in customers being able to implement some of the prevention measures like the devices that we've helped them install in their vehicles. So I think them having awareness—I think that awareness is already out there now, though, so it's just how we continue to work with them to help prevent them from becoming a victim of theft.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, and thank you, everyone, who presented this afternoon.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): That's good timing.

Moving on to MPP French, please.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I will begin with the folks from Aviva Canada. Thank you very much for your presentation. I have the opportunity to serve as the official opposition critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways, and I have been quite interested and active on the VIN fraud file and that mess. One of the things that I cannot wrap my brain around with this particular government is that we don't see the preventative measures that we see even in other jurisdictions—a VIN verification system. I don't know what's in the way.

So what I would like to ask you about: We've heard reported stories of people who have bought stolen vehicles unknowingly from dealerships. They obviously can't get them insured, or find themselves, if they've been driving them, that the insurance doesn't cover them in the event of collision. They certainly didn't intend to buy one. There's

not a clear path or a “what to do” for a dealership that accidentally sells a stolen vehicle, so we’re in quite a mess in the province. I do hope that what we see in this bill will serve as a deterrent, but car thieves are unlikely to be deterred by penalties as long as there is such potential for financial reward. You gave us some big numbers and, obviously, massive costs to you and, I would say, to drivers.

In your opinion, what would you help to prevent VIN fraud? I’m going to stay in the provincial lane. I recognize the federal—there’s a need for all hands on deck, but I want to stay in the provincial lane. Is there anything that you have seen that could be improved to prevent VIN fraud and auto theft?

Ms. Jamie Lee: Yes, so we have actually given a number of recommendations and we’ve been working and been engaged with MTO on some of those recommendations. We have actually seen some of those recommendations already taken forward, and we have seen some of the changes just recently, such as the RIN lines, where we’re actually stopping anyone having access to all of the VINs, that they can access to then use them to put on to stolen vehicles. We’ve definitely seen positive steps in the right direction, but again, we have shared, and I know the MTO is aware and have been working on some of those recommendations.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I think the committee would be glad if you wanted to share that with us. Everyone is interested in solving this problem.

One of the things that has been reported—and I can’t get a real answer when I have asked various ministers. I don’t know what’s in the way of that VIN verification system. I understand that there’s a cost to Ontarians that has sort of been held up as a reason.

What is the cost of auto theft for the average Ontarian? Is there a way to distill that into a number?

Ms. Jamie Lee: It’s very difficult to say in a number. Obviously, increased costs will ultimately result in increased premiums. So that’s part of the reason we’ve really been working to try and lower the costs as much as possible and doing everything we can to put prevention measures in place.

For the VIN verification, I know that that’s a potential solution, but I don’t think it’s the only solution that could work on its own. I think it’s about, again, combining a number of things. I’m more than happy to share the things that we would recommend as a part of that.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am happy to take you up on that offer. Thank you.

I think, unless there’s anything else that you wanted to add for the committee, I’m going to shift back to Ms. Stuckless. If there’s anything else from Aviva?

Ms. Jamie Lee: No.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay. Well, thank you for the important work that you do. I know that the government has promised/threatened legislation on VIN fraud, and so I think all of us will be turning our attention to that and we will look forward to organizations such as yourself to weigh in on that.

Ms. Stuckless, I have a question for you. It was interesting, listening to your presentation. The changes that the government is making that we can see—removing the

definition of “power-assisted bicycle” and that it will now fall under the definition of “motor-assisted bicycle.” You had kind of talked about that and I heard you seeking clarification for the next step: that if all e-bikes are going to be classed as, in effect, mopeds, then that requires class M licences, plates and insurance. I don’t think anyone’s thinking that would be appropriate for many of the e-bikes we recognize as bicycle-style or bicycle-type.

Do you have concerns about that change, in and of itself, without knowing what else the government is intending?

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: Yes. My understanding, as you’ve also said, is that it would then kind of fall under motor-assisted bicycles for regulations. I know we have an opportunity through the regulations to kind of refine what those categories would look like and that is a good opportunity. Why I wanted to appear here today was just to make sure that putting them in a certain place, and that what Bill 197 is doing isn’t creating additional barriers that we then need to overcome with more complicated categories, like noticing that there was the 16-year-old requirement still on there, like noticing that there was the no-passenger requirement. Are those, then, things that we need to overcome with more complicated categories? I think that would be my main concern.

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What I’d really like to see happen as well is—we’re seeing leading jurisdictions, like the European Union and, most recently, British Columbia, creating classes of e-bikes that are actually just treated exactly like non-electric bicycles. I wonder if what is being done would allow that to happen with certain categories, because I think that should be the goal in the way that they function, in the way that we know through research and safety reports that many e-bikes can function in the same areas as non-electric bicycles. I just want to make sure that we’re not creating a barrier that we then need to overcome later through this bill.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I think that had been a question that I’ve had from the beginning, is if we are creating needless red tape, because this is the only change that we’re understanding because we don’t know what is intended to be accomplished through the regulations. So with this change alone—I have learned after serving for hours and hours and hours on the MOMS Act and getting into the wheels and the weeds that this is not a government that has gotten it right the first couple of times we’ve tried. I hope we will all watch carefully and that it is a success.

Please stay connected and tell all your friends to stay connected once we do see those regulations. We want to make sure it’s working.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you. We’ll move on to MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My questions to start will be for Jamie. Thank you so much for coming in today. It’s really important that we have an expert and a user of these pedal-assist, as I call them, vehicles or bikes. I was speaking about this this morning—actually, all day—that if you surveyed everyone in this room, everyone out there,

everyone has a different definition for the different bicycles. There's no commonality, and there needs to be, because it's "motor-assisted," it's "power-assisted," it's "pedal-assisted," it's "scooters," it's "mopeds," "e-bikes." Oftentimes, the pedal-assist users, people who use pedal-assist bikes, get denigrated with the scofflaw, maybe, scooters that are bombing around the bike lanes.

You're mentioning that the US has this three-class system, and then Durham adopted this bicycle-style e-bike label. We know that 22% of Ontarians bike on a daily basis. We know the government is using old stats and facts on that, so we want to get them apprised of the reality on the roads.

Which would you suggest of those two systems? Or the name—would you like us just to adopt the naming and work with regulations through that definition or work on the US three-class system?

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: I think that's a helpful question. I don't think it has to be either/or, because I do think that some of the things that the MTO sought to do through the MOMS Act were kind of based on the three-class system. If you look at the bicycle-style e-bike that was included in the MOMS Act, it's really a combination of class 1 and class 2. I think that was a really great move. Honestly, I was thinking afterwards—when MPP French asked me what I liked about the MOMS Act, I regretted not saying that, that I liked that bicycle-style was a combination of class 1 and class 2, because my understanding is MTO staff did some research and found there wasn't necessarily a ton of difference between them so they would combine them.

But what I think was problematic about the MOMS Act is then a bunch of additional regulations and requirements were added on top that aren't part of the three-class system. I think we could move forward with both, using the three-class system, having some kind of blanket language that makes it easier to understand, like "bicycle-style e-bikes." We just need to be really careful about adding on unique characteristics that then make things like family-style cargo bikes or adaptive e-trikes non-permissible through the law.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great. I really appreciate this. I think it's a great visual for everyone out there—

here—to see who we want to bring home safely, and that definitely these families should be on the road and brought home safely in physically separated bike lanes in a connected network that we have in Toronto and other places, and we want those municipalities to be able to keep them. So I really appreciate that.

Do you think it would be wise for the government to continue connecting with you on this issue?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): One minute remaining.

Ms. Jamie Stuckless: Yes, sure.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Awesome.

My last question is for Anne. Thank you so much for all you do and for keeping Ontarians safe. I really like what you said about how we need to educate passengers who get in vehicles, because not every young person is getting their license these days, and also that we need to be mindful of the alcohol sales in convenience stores. I know near me, the closest convenience store is Petro-Canada, the gas station, so literally you're filling up twice, right? You could possibly be filling up twice. Comments on that and how to get that right?

Ms. Anne Leonard: Well, we fought beer in convenience stores for 10 years and we lost, so we get it. The people of Ontario wanted it, and that's fine. But yes, we want to see it sold responsibly and safely—hours of service, auditing, ID-ing, training—so that even though I'm only 19 and this is my summer job, I still need to be trained on how to identify someone who shouldn't be sold alcohol.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you so much.

I want to just thank everyone. This concludes the business for today. Thank you again for all the presenters and the committee members.

As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 6 p.m. today. The deadline for filing amendments to this bill is 7 p.m. today.

The committee is now adjourned until 10 a.m. on November 15, 2024, when we begin clause-by-clause consideration on the bill. Have a nice evening.

The committee adjourned at 1457.

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