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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

HE-9

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-9

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

More Homes Built Faster Act,
2022

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 10 November 2022

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

Loi de 2022 visant à accélérer
la construction de plus
de logements

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi 10 novembre 2022

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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CONTENTS

Thursday 10 November 2022

More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, Bill 23, Mr. Clark / Loi de 2022 visant à accélérer la construction de plus de logements, projet de loi 23, M. Clark.....	HE-109
Ontario Home Builders' Association; Ontario for All; Peel ACORN	HE-109
Mr. Luca Bucci	
Mr. Sean Meagher	
Ms. Tanya Burkart	
Future Majority; Mr. Felix Vortsman; Brampton Environmental Alliance	HE-119
Ms. Ottavia Paluch	
Mr. David Laing	
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority	HE-128
Mr. John MacKenzie	

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**

Thursday 10 November 2022

Jeudi 10 novembre 2022

The committee met at 1000 in the Garden Banquet and Convention Centre, Brampton.

MORE HOMES BUILT FASTER ACT, 2022

**LOI DE 2022 VISANT
À ACCÉLÉRER LA CONSTRUCTION
DE PLUS DE LOGEMENTS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Supporting Growth and Housing in York and Durham Regions Act, 2022 / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant diverses lois, abrogeant divers règlements et édictant la Loi de 2022 visant à soutenir la croissance et la construction de logements dans les régions de York et de Durham.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Isaiah Thorning): Good morning, honourable members. In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, it is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Yes, I nominate MPP Amarjot Sandhu to act as Chair.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Isaiah Thorning): Thank you. Do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Yes, I do.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Isaiah Thorning): Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, I declare nominations closed and MPP Sandhu elected Acting Chair of the committee.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Brampton, Ontario. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to resume public hearings on Bill 23, An Act to amend various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Supporting Growth and Housing in York and Durham Regions Act, 2022. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard and broadcast and recording.

Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we begin?

Seeing none, today's presenters have been scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot, with each presenter allotted seven minutes for an opening statement,

followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses divided into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent members of the committee. Are there any questions?

**ONTARIO HOME BUILDERS'
ASSOCIATION**

ONTARIO FOR ALL

PEEL ACORN

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Seeing none, now I will call the first presenters of the day: the Ontario Home Builders' Association, Ontario for All and Peel ACORN. Can you please come forward? And please state your name for the record: Ontario Home Builders' Association, you can start your presentation whenever you are ready.

Mr. Luca Bucci: Thank you, Chair. My name is Luca Bucci and I am the CEO of the Ontario Home Builders' Association. I'm glad to be here today to speak in favour of Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022.

With more than 4,000 member companies, the OHBA is the voice of the home building, land development and professional renovation industries across the province of Ontario. To put residential construction's impact in perspective, consider that the building and renovation industry provides more than 554,000 jobs in the province, pays over \$37 billion in wages annually, and generates over \$76 billion in direct investment value.

OHBA is proudly affiliated with our 27 local associations, including the Building Industry and Land Development Association, the West End HBA and the Greater Ottawa HBA, as well as the Canadian Home Builders' Association. OHBA members construct the vast majority of new housing in the province, which represents approximately half of the housing starts in Ontario in any given year. Our members also renovate the existing housing stock and build purpose-built rentals across our region.

OHBA, for years, has been raising awareness about the growing housing supply problem across the province, which is a significant contributor to the affordability challenges we are experiencing. In 2021, OHBA worked with the Smart Prosperity Institute to better understand the disparities between housing supply and the projected family

formations in Ontario. The number we found was staggering: Over 2.2 million more people will call Ontario home by 2031. However, Ontario simply isn't building enough homes fast enough to meet the future demand.

Since 2021, we have seen demand further accelerate. By the time the province's Housing Affordability Task Force report was released, we all learned that 1.5 million homes were needed in the next decade. In addition, the federal government announced earlier this month that it plans to increase immigration targets for Canada to 500,000 people per year by 2025. Consider that 2021 was the best year for housing starts in Ontario in a generation. In that year, the industry built slightly more than 100,000 new homes. This means that we need to increase housing starts by 50% and keep building at that rate for a decade—a monumental challenge.

However, not meeting that objective would have real and significant negative impacts on Ontario's competitiveness, Ontario's quality of life and economic sustainability. What this means is that the goal of 1.5 million homes in the next 10 years is an enormous challenge that requires bold changes and innovative thinking. It requires significantly increasing the pace and volume of home construction in Ontario.

We've arrived at this housing supply crisis because of three long-standing challenges faced by new homeowners in the residential construction industry. First, there are too many added costs on new housing in the form of fees, taxes and charges from all layers of government. Second, it takes too long to obtain approvals to build new homes, with too many parties involved and too much duplication. Finally, land supply in Ontario is severely constrained or land is zoned in such a way that adding density or new homes is very difficult. It not only makes it challenging to add supply, but significantly drives up the cost of land.

OHBA supports Bill 23 because it will make it faster, easier and more affordable to build new homes. First, Bill 23 addresses rising costs for buyers. In many areas of Ontario, upwards of 25% of the cost of the average home is related to government fees, charges and taxes. Municipal fee charges have also been escalating significantly, with development charges increasing radically with little notice to builders or buyers. These fees are ultimately baked into the cost of new housing and are placed on the backs of new homeowners. Bill 23 adds predictability for new homeowners by defining what should and shouldn't be paid for by development charges, and limits future increases through freezing and limiting numerous charges, including development charges, community benefit charges and conservation authority fees.

Second, the bill makes it easier to add supply and density with new as-of-right zoning provisions.

Finally, Bill 23 will spur the construction of more housing by introducing a cultural change that is desperately needed. This legislation signals to municipalities that they must approve new housing in a timely manner, as required by provincial legislation. Simply put, it makes housing an imperative. It also encourages parties such as conservation authorities to remain focused on their core priorities. It

rejects the status quo of NIMBYism and even the ideologies of BANANAs—build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone—that hinders the addition of new homes. Finally, it focuses on more homes for people in all communities in Ontario, and a variety of homes for people at all stages of life. This is a housing culture change that is required across our province, and we are glad to see the province taking a lead.

In conclusion, we have on our hands a significant housing supply crisis that takes place in communities big and small across Ontario. The remedies are grounded in greatly increasing the supply of homes by speeding up approvals and building, therefore improving affordability and securing long-term competitiveness and livability in Ontario.

Bill 23 puts forward a bold vision and provides real solutions to help us address the housing supply crisis so that more Ontarians can find a home in a community where they can live, work and play.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak here today. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for your presentation.

Now I'd like to call Ontario for All. You can begin your presentation.

Mr. Sean Meagher: Thank you. My name is Sean Meagher. I'm the coordinator of Ontario for All, which is a project of the United Way serving Peel, Toronto and York region that supports non-profits to help them inform the public policy process. I'm very happy to be here today to bring forward concerns that have been raised in our meetings with non-profit leaders across the GTA and, indeed, across Ontario.

I want to start by saying that the goal of this bill—creating more homes that are more affordable for people in Ontario—is a laudable goal, and we welcome important steps that will help to create new units of affordable housing. It's no surprise that non-profit leaders value the reduction in taxes on non-profit developments that are committed to affordable housing, which would lower costs and make more projects viable. As-of-right permissions on secondary suites should remove some barriers to new homes, some of which are likely to be affordable. Those are steps forward.

However, there are a number of unintended consequences in this bill that undermine those efforts if they're not corrected. The bill, as it's currently written, would eliminate the charges that developers currently pay toward affordable housing. This will, according to recent estimates, eliminate hundreds of millions of dollars that municipalities currently invest in creating affordable housing, and that would dramatically reduce municipal affordable housing efforts.

In conversations with staff from Peel region, for example, it has become clear that their housing master plan—a master plan that Minister Sarkaria helped to launch—is dependent on those DCs and will have to be dramatically curtailed without them.

Kitchener non-profit housing providers tell me that they will be out of business without their municipal funding. The bill's removal of housing services from the list of allowable development charges undermines critical strategic investments that municipalities make to ensure affordable housing is getting built.

The bill also constrains municipal efforts to require affordable housing in new developments. The new limits on inclusionary zoning are well below the targets in by-laws that local governments have already passed, and these bylaws are based on rigorous local economic studies about the affordability of those provisions that are required by this government and carried out by consultants that are employed by the development industry to ensure that they are accurate. Local governments will lose much of the benefit of another tool that helps them create affordable housing locally.

1010

By setting the definition of affordability for home ownership at 80% of the market rate, units that would have sold for a million dollars are now considered affordable and exempted from development charges if they sell for \$800,000—\$800,000 homes are not affordable homes; this bill will make them that.

These aspects of the bill cut hundreds of millions of dollars from municipal investments in affordable housing and cancel plans that would have built thousands of new permanently affordable homes. That is definitely a step backwards on your goal.

Equally troubling, the bill puts at risk housing protection programs. Recent studies have shown that we are losing about 15 affordable units for every one that we're currently building. Preventing the loss of affordable homes is a critical part of success in any housing strategy.

Rental housing replacement programs ensure that when apartment buildings are redeveloped and affordable units are replaced at affordable prices, tenants have access to those units over the long term. These programs have saved 4,000 units of affordable rental housing in Ontario. Current applications for rental housing demolitions are nearly at a thousand units. These homes will be replaced under the existing policies, but would not be if those are repealed under this bill.

The bill also has a negative impact on day-to-day affordability for ordinary families. The bill cuts taxes and fees for developers, eliminating hundreds of millions in funding that used to go to building roads, sewers, parks and other amenities. But those roads and sewers are still needed, and funding them will put significant pressure on property taxes and on water bills, even though tax increases would be difficult for families to afford in these tough times.

The municipal government of York region put it very well in their recent report to council. They said this bill seems "to transfer risk from private developers to the public." They also said, "Any development charge reduction, exemption, discount, or removal ... may impact the ability of the region to deliver vital, growth-related infrastructure"—the infrastructure that allows us to build more

homes—and "the gap may need to be funded from" taxes and "user rates." This is bad news for struggling families.

Lastly, nothing in the bill ensures that the new homes that will be built—and built faster under this bill, built with public incentives—are in fact affordable. Though developers will benefit from hundreds of millions in tax cuts and fee cuts under this bill, there is nothing that requires them to build affordable units or pass any of those savings on to their customers. Unlike programs like the Housing Master Plan in Peel, unlike the Open Door program that Mayor Tory introduced in Toronto, where incentives and benefits are directly tied to the actual delivery of affordable units, this bill has no such provisions: no affordable housing agreements, no targets, no standards. While lower taxes and reduced regulatory requirements may lead developers to offer homes at less than the current market rates, there is nothing in the bill that prevents them from continuing to charge what buyers are willing to pay—and, in fairness, that is their obligation to their shareholders.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Sean Meagher: In short, the unexamined consequences of this bill are very likely to actually make it harder to produce affordable homes and—given the constraints on funding for infrastructure that supports new development—in many ways, harder to create more homes at all. Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for the presentation.

Our next presenter is Peel ACORN. If you can please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Tanya Burkart: Good morning. My name is Tanya Burkart, and I'm a member of Peel ACORN.

I just wanted to talk briefly about the root cause of the housing crisis, because this bill does not address the root causes: corporate landlords who are protected by federal law that allows them to not pay tax on the profits. They take their investment, and instead of investing in housing, they pay investors their dividends. There is also, in Ontario, a lack of vacancy control, so rent is not regulated. By restricting supply of rentable units, corporate landlords maintain high profits and also rent goes unregulated. For rent control between tenants, there is no set amount; they're not regulated in any way.

Bill 23 impacts inclusionary zoning laws that advocacy groups have advocated for over time. It took us a year in Mississauga to get 8% in certain regions, and the affordability period isn't 25 years; it's perpetuity. So you're taking affordable housing and, in 25 years, that housing will become unaffordable and market value. CMHC uses the definition of affordable housing at 30% of household income and not 80% of market value. There's a vast difference between those two numbers.

Relieving developers of fees—for roads, for sewer, for water, for hydro, for infrastructure—passes those fees on to municipalities and taxpayers. We already pay for health care, and so adding infrastructure values to land and property tax is not fair. Those fees were designed—if a

developer wants to develop and wants to build housing, those fees belong with the developer.

Rental replacement bylaws: Certain municipalities have bylaws that protect tenants in terms of renoviction and demoviction; they allow for replacement of units. This bill will strip tenants of those rights. It's overriding protection for tenants, and it's not maintaining the rental stock that we have.

I know in my community in Brampton, there hasn't been purpose-built rental for decades, and so we can't blame developers for not building, because the land is there. It's just that corporate landlords and developers don't want to build rental because there's more money in condos. In our community, we need two- and three-bedroom units. Developers don't want to pay to build two- and three-bedroom units. And so supply isn't because we're not building houses; it's because developers are choosing to build a certain type of housing.

Other aspects of this bill that are concerning are the reduction of conservation authorities and environmental protections. The Premier has said that he does not want to take land from the greenbelt but has gone back on that and is taking land from the greenbelt. This bypasses targets for carbon reduction and emissions, and so the land use is not responsible.

I would like to end my submission by sharing my experiences with a big corporate landlord. My property was owned by Wynn Family Properties. Then in 2018 it was purchased by Starlight Investments, and in 2022 it was bought by Boardwalk—both large billion-dollar corporate landlords.

The journey has been alarming and scary. I've had to fight for basic smoke detectors, CO alarms. Conditions in the building such as mould, leaks—everything leaks: the roof, the faucets, the pipes. I've had to fight for the removal of faulty wiring. I have no accessibility, even today. There's been a lack of respect and intimidation from the landlord because I speak up.

The same three-bedroom townhouse that I rented in May 2018 for \$1,500 is now being rented for \$2,459. So the affordable housing that we have is being destroyed by corporate landlords. It's not that we don't have it. It's being turned into something else: unaffordable housing.

Tenants need more protections, not less, and just because you build it doesn't mean it's affordable for the missing middle like me. I make above guidelines for social housing, but I don't make enough to buy a house. The average house in Peel is \$1.2 million. So people on disability and seniors on fixed incomes? This bill does not provide affordable housing for us.

We've had chronic underfunding for decades from every level of government. The federal government, the provincial government and municipalities do not want to be in the housing business.

I strongly urge this committee and the government to consider the impact of Bill 23 on everyday people like me and on the tenants who are in desperate need of affordable housing and support. Thank you to the committee for letting me speak today.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start now with 39 minutes of questioning, and we'll start the first round with the official opposition. You have 7.5 minutes.

1020

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. And it's two rounds, right?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, two rounds.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay.

Thank you very much for coming in and speaking today and sharing your expertise, both of you, and your experience as a renter.

My first question is to Tanya Burkart: What would you like to see in Bill 23 that would provide better protections and stability for renters?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: Better protection is using CMHC's definition of affordable housing, which is 30% of household income, and for the housing to be kept affordable forever and not to return to market condition, because then it's no longer affordable housing by definition.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much.

My second question is to Sean Meagher. Sean, I would like you to, if you could, just clarify the differences in affordability with what the current city of Toronto definition of affordability is right now and what your concerns are with the changes to the definition of affordability in this bill.

Mr. Sean Meagher: Certainly. The city of Toronto is a good example. The city of Toronto uses, essentially, what the CMHC uses. Their current bylaw says that for an apartment to be considered affordable and for it to benefit from the incentives and the benefits that come with being designated an affordable unit, it has to be rented for 30% of the median income, for bachelors and one-bedrooms, and then there are slightly different rates for larger units, for three-bedroom and four-bedroom homes.

The dollar value of that difference is really quite significant. A bachelor is a really great example. A bachelor unit in the city of Toronto will rent for an average of about \$1,400 a month. The average income of the average Torontonians would sustain a rental of about \$880 a month. So we're talking about almost a 50% increase in the cost of an "affordable" unit if we move from one definition to another.

Definitions don't sound terribly exciting, but if you're the person who's paying 50% more in rent, that's a very exciting topic.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. And then can you just clarify for me how this changes the definition of affordability when it comes to the affordable own option?

Mr. Sean Meagher: So, affordable home ownership—the municipalities have the right to set what the affordable home ownership price would be, and they set it well below what this bill does. This bill sets it at 80% of the sale price of the average home of that type. Here in Peel, I believe the average home price is \$1.3 million, so that would put an affordable home in Peel at just over a million dollars. I know lots of people in Peel; I don't know very many of them who can afford a million-dollar home.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, that's very concerning to see what the definitions of affordability, these changes, mean when it comes to providing homes that are then exempt from development charges. It does seem quite concerning to me.

What would you recommend development charges be in this bill? If we were going to introduce amendments to the development charges piece, do you have recommendations for us or principles that we should abide by when we're thinking that through?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think it's really important to think about what development charges actually are. Development charges aren't like income taxes, where we're just trying to get a piece because we need to buy a lot of stuff. Development charges are specifically linked to the things we need to build in a city to make it sustainable as we build new development. So, roads and sewers—and, under some of the new legislation, parks—are rolled up into some of those things. And we have development charges for making sure that as we build new developments, as neighbourhoods improve, and gentrify, as they will as they improve, we're creating enough affordable housing to make sure that the families that are there can stay in their own neighbourhood. That's what that investment is.

This bill takes away from those development charges one component that's been critically important, and it's quite substantial, which is the housing services component. And it says, "That's not a thing that you need to build a city that works anymore. That's not a thing that you can charge developers in order to build a city that works anymore." Well, I encourage you to talk to anybody in municipal government, anywhere in Ontario, and see if they think that affordable housing is not something you need in order to make a city work in Ontario, because it absolutely is.

That removal, which mayors and AMO and regional councils have expressed concern about, really is a catastrophic component of this bill. It really will do an enormous amount of harm, so I strongly encourage the committee, when they get to clause-by-clause, to strike that component. It is deeply unhelpful.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. One other question around the development charge piece. I notice that there is an elimination of development charges for non-profit housing, co-op housing, non-market housing. Do you have a position or a take on that piece, around if they should be eliminated, phased in, same rate?

Mr. Sean Meagher: The virtue of that adjustment is that it's tied to a benefit for the public. If you build non-profit housing, you can be exempted from development charges. That will lower your cost and you'll be able to build more non-profit housing in Ontario. What you'll get from that is guaranteed to be non-profit housing. It's a requirement of that arrangement.

There are a lot of non-profit housing developments that teeter on the brink—that just a little bit more money, a little bit more investment or a little bit of a break on land costs, or whatever it might be, and it can go ahead. I think that's very valuable, but it's valuable because it's an investment that we're making and we know what the return on that investment is. We're investing some development

charges that we would otherwise probably not collect, because those projects wouldn't go ahead, and we're getting affordable housing.

Many municipalities already do that. This would extend what most large cities either do regularly or do as a matter of course to all cities in Ontario, and that's really helpful.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My final question is around the impact of development charges on municipalities. We've had numerous submissions from the city of Toronto, Mississauga, Peel, talking about the reduction of fees, development charge fees, and how it will affect the municipal budget. In the case of the city of Toronto, Mayor Tory is estimating that it will lead to a reduction in revenue of about \$200 million. What role should the province play? What would be some solutions to fixing that \$200-million revenue hole that the city of Toronto has, and that other municipalities have something similar? How do we fix that piece?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think a good example of the province of Ontario doing something very smart to make sure the cities themselves do something smart is the provision in the inclusionary zoning legislation that says you can't pass a new inclusionary zoning bylaw—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off, but the time has come up. We'll continue that in the second round.

We'll move to the independent members now. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much for coming in up to Brampton, or over to Brampton, and sharing your stories and thoughts with us. I really appreciate you taking the time.

We know we're in a housing crisis. We want to do something about it. We should have done something about it a long time ago, but here we are. We want to get building—shovels in the ground, as they say—but we want to do it right. It's not about whether we do it; it's about how we do it. We need to do it smartly, sustainably, safely, equitably, affordably, and we need to have the right—a complete diverse array of housing types, not just your big single-family home with the white picket fence. That's not going to work everywhere. And we're in a climate crisis. Everyone is aware. We want to build resilient infrastructure. We've been warned by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, by the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation in Waterloo, about the return on investment for investing in climate adaptation versus the high cost of inaction.

My first few questions are for you, Luca, on the hot seat—a friendly hot seat. You're builders; you represent a bunch of builders. Can you tell me about your green builders and their approach to building sustainably? And any thoughts on the Toronto Green Standard?

Mr. Luca Bucci: It's a great question, and thank you for the opportunity to comment. Builders across Ontario, much to the cause of a lot of the policies that were brought in by the previous Liberal government, are held to a very high standard when it comes to building in an environmentally sustainable way. There's a number of studies that

we have to take with the Ministry of the Environment, both on the federal and the provincial level, before shovels can go in the ground anywhere. As you work through the building process, whether it's the grading process or whether it's the actual construction of the new home, a number of these environmental studies are being considered by these two levels of government to ensure that whatever type of home we build—whether it's a single-family home, whether it's a stacked townhome, or whether it's a condominium—are built in a way that is sustainable.

1030

As an industry, we actually believe that environmental sustainability and home construction can co-exist, because they have co-existed for the better part of a decade. We also go through rigorous studies on endangered species. There is a story of one of our members—I believe it was in Waterdown—who had to build a bridge to facilitate the crossing of either a turtle or a salamander within their housing development. So we're really focused on ensuring that whatever we're building is built in a sustainable way.

Municipalities, not only in Toronto but across the board, are considering a certain standard to apply to how we build our homes. Currently, the OHBA is working with the federal government on the national building code, which includes a number of green standards, not only on how you interact with the land but just the physical construction of the home itself.

A lot of our members appreciate that there is a concern on how the homes are built sustainably, and we are working well with all levels of government through these different processes to make sure that whatever home we build is built in a sustainable way.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So you'd be supportive. There's the Toronto Green Standard and then—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: —some municipalities have their green standards as well, but would you be supportive of a rollout across all municipalities for green standards for green buildings and building the green economy?

Mr. Luca Bucci: I think there's always an opportunity for municipalities, the province and the federal government to find ways to build more sustainable homes with our builders. Traditionally, our builders have been very co-operative to find ways to bring those standards into their construction processes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That's great to hear. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll move to the government side now for the first round of questioning. MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you to all the witnesses who are here today. The housing supply crisis, I really feel, is a generational challenge facing our province. We know, on this side, that we put forward a plan to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years because the supply simply isn't keeping up with the demand. The current market prices out millennial Canadians who did the right

thing—went to school, got good jobs—and can't get into the market. It prices out new Canadians who want to move to our province and make it their home. And it prices out seniors who are looking for revised places to live.

That being said, I have some questions for Mr. Bucci. We've heard some criticism from the opposition that says that when we lower development charges on building, the developers will simply pocket the savings and walk away with it. Why should anybody trust that the builders are going to be passing on those savings to the consumers?

Mr. Luca Bucci: On the issue of development charges or any charges that are associated with building, whether it's a parkland or community benefit charges, I just want to make one thing clear: The industry supports the concept that growth has to pay for growth. Our industry is not against development charges. Our industry isn't against parkland charges. Our industry isn't against CBCs. We actually think it's a way to facilitate the construction of homes faster, because the previous regime, when we're looking at how we can fund infrastructure, was a little bit, for lack of a better term, more slow to get these things online before these kinds of different charges come into play. What the industry has an issue with is that there have been a number of occasions, particularly since June of this year, where these charges have been increased exponentially without proper justification, most likely—and I'm just speculating—to kind of fund budgetary shortfalls within municipalities that were a result of COVID.

I'll give you two examples. One township in eastern Ontario started including the purchase of emergency cots in the development charges. I don't know much about infrastructure, but I don't think a cot is a waste water pipe or a water pipe that's going to facilitate housing development. So why are we bringing that into the development charge? Furthermore, in Burlington, parkland charges increased by 500% overnight in July. One of our members was put in a position where a parkland charge of, I think, \$5,000 per door went to \$25,000 per door, which put a \$5-million pressure on his development.

Now, when you construct homes you have financial obligations to banks, you have financial obligations to lenders, and you have financial obligations to the consumer who purchased that condo in a pre-construction contract. When you're adding a \$500-million pressure, that's—I would challenge you to find anybody working in any industry who can absorb a \$5-million pressure overnight. Right?

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Mr. Bucci. Another concern that we've heard—you know, we've heard from municipalities and other stakeholders saying that zoning is kind of the bottom issue; that there's all this land zoned that builders aren't building on, whether it's for the labour shortage, whether it's for commodity prices.

The example was given to me recently, thinking about a powerlifter, that it doesn't matter how much you squat; if the upper body isn't doing the rest of the work, you're never going to get the weight up. I look at this problem in a similar way. If we can't get the labour and the commodities—you know, we could zone everything to death. What

assurances do we have from the industry that the zoning changes that would be put forward in this bill would actually result in any new houses getting built?

Mr. Luca Bucci: Just sheer motivation by market demand; again, all markets are driven by the fact that if there's a demand, someone is going to build. The only reasons our builders aren't building on land that is already slated for build are lack of infrastructure, inability to get access to adequate supply and labour shortages. It's not like the industry is sitting on these lands to speculate, right? In the market that we had—every builder is incentivized to build to fill the demand that's created by the new homeowner. At the end of the day, just like if you're operating in any other industry, your primary incentive is to make sure you're meeting that demand of the consumer. So we have no reason to sit back on these pieces of land and wait to build on them when there is such a demand right now.

We have to build 1.5 million new homes. Even the CMHC, an industry that has a hand's-length tie to our industry, actually thinks that the number is closer to 1.8 million. These aren't numbers that are coming from our industry; these are numbers that are coming from credible sources who are involved in building houses on a daily basis.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks. We know the housing supply crisis, as I mentioned, hits millennials, hits new Canadians and hits seniors. Some of the changes that we're putting forward in this bill we hope will help seniors. Think of your own mother or your own parents' generation: What changes do you think we're making here that are actually going to be able to help your mother's generation?

Mr. Luca Bucci: Can I give you a personal example? My mother is currently thinking about moving my grandmother into her home. I think a lot of the provisions that you're bringing in with exclusionary zoning are going to help her do that in a way that's a lot easier and a lot more expedient, for lack of a better term.

I also think that the more you increase the opportunity to build homes from a perspective of supply, the more options you're going to give to different homeowners to participate in that market. And not only that, but the more homes that you build outside of the urban boundary means that you're freeing up homes within the urban boundary and within these densely populated areas for people who can't afford those single-family-type homes. The reason why there's such a demand for rent right now is because people can't afford to go live in the suburbs and then they're staying in these condos or these rental units downtown, right?

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks. I've got to give the rest of my time to Mr. Grewal.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you so much. First of all, welcome, everybody, to Brampton. Thank you for being here and joining us today on the standing committee for Bill 23. My question—since we're very limited on time, I'd ask you to keep it short, as well—is going to be to ACORN.

My question, Ms. Tanya: We talked a lot about housing affordability in your commentary, and I want to talk about the fact that Bill 23 allows for people to build secondary suites, allows for people to build garden suites. Do you believe that the construction of these suites is then going to further the rental supply, the affordable rental supply, for people to obtain homes, for newcomers that are coming here to get quality housing? Do you think that portion of Bill 23 is really going to help increase that supply and increase that rental availability?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: I think part of that process already occurs. I just think it occurs in a different manner. I do live in Brampton and I know that we have thousands of unregistered basement units—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Tanya Burkart: And so that process does occur. Yes, those—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'm so sorry to interrupt, because we're very short on time. Do you believe that the legalizing of all of these secondary suites and adding more garden suites is going to help increase (a) the rental demand and (b) that we have legalized apartments?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: Yes.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions? Seeing none, we'll move to the second round of questioning now.

We'll start this round with the independent members. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh, wow. We're going a different way. Usually it's—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Well, you had the first round. First, second and then—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Usually it always goes, or always went, to opposition, but—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): No, it's the Chair's discretion. The Chair decides on that, so independent members.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: You're keeping us on our game. Sorry to go ahead, but thanks. I'm happy to do that.

Tanya, thanks for your presentation. You brought up the conservation authorities, which we heard a lot about yesterday. My first question to you would be, do you feel that the conservation authorities have been doing a good job in protecting Ontarians and being good stewards of Ontario's lands?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: I can't speak to overall, but I know, in my community, yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great. I would ask the same of Sean: Your thoughts on the conservation authorities and the work they've done, their expertise?

Mr. Sean Meagher: Yes, the conservation authorities have been a really great partner, and in part because they do one of the things that I think MPP Bell was alluding to before, which is that they support local decision-making that can be responsive to different kinds of circumstances.

1040

River valleys, our lakes—they're all different; there's not a single type. So having local authorities that can look at the specific impacts of different kinds of changes on land that they know well is the most responsive and intelligent way to do that kind of regulation, and the conservation authorities have done that quite responsibly.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure. Great. And Tanya, who do you feel this bill would benefit the most and the least?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: The most? I think developers, because they have access to land they wouldn't normally. They have developer fees waived.

And let's be clear: Developers are billion-dollar corporations. They're not in it to build housing; they are in it to make money. And so, yes, they will provide affordable housing. Affordable for who? is the question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sean, the same question please.

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think it's pretty clear that the development industry benefits an awful lot from this. They get lower development charges. They get exemptions from development charges. They get accelerated approvals. They get access to land they didn't get access to before. And they get that with no obligations attached. It's entirely up to them whether they pass that along to consumers, whether they build affordably or not.

The province of Ontario has not matched what they're giving with what the public is getting. What the public gets is whatever the development industry wants to give them. What the province gives to the development industry is hundreds of millions of dollars in benefits that come out of public pockets, much of which will either have to mean cuts to services to ordinary Ontarians or increased taxes and water rates for ordinary Ontarians. There's a pretty big imbalance there.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, great. The last question is rapid-fire because I only have a minute or so. For all three of you: What's one piece of advice for us as we consider Bill 23? Luca.

Mr. Luca Bucci: One piece of advice is: Let's just make sure that all the facts are properly researched before we adhere to, let's say—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Luca Bucci:—some narratives that are coming from people who are perceived to be losing out from the bill. That would be my piece of advice.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, great. Tanya?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: Take your time and make sure that the development is responsible and that you're providing development and housing for the people that really need it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. Sean?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I'd echo Tanya's comment: Take your time. These are big changes. It's a 227-page bill. It's moving pretty fast, and I think people have flagged a number of unintended consequences.

In particular, take your time to hear from the people who are responsible for looking after how this works on

the front lines: your municipal governments. Mayor Crombie is a smart woman. Mayor Tory is a smart guy. AMO is a responsible organization. And they're all saying there are risks here that you have not properly calculated. Slow down, figure out what they are and adjust to it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. The time has come up.

We'll move to the government side now for their second round. MPP Smith?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank all of the contributors this morning. We appreciate you coming here and providing your information.

This question, through you, Chair, is to Sean at Ontario for All.

Bill 23, if passed, would help cities, towns and rural communities grow with a mix of ownership. I listened to your statement regarding secondary legal units. Bill 23, if passed, would convert single and family homes and townhouses, mid-rise apartments. Streamlining the approval would increase affordable housing.

Do you have anything, in your opinion, that could be done, or could you make a statement regarding these specific units—red tape for a home would be decreased for the builder, and we would have multiple units in one single dwelling.

So I guess my question to you is: Could you talk about the amending and the zoning bylaws and how this missing middle that you touched upon with respect to increasing supply—how would this benefit the group that you are talking about as a secondary housing issue and on an affordability issue?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think two things about that—and thank you very much for the question, because I think it is really important.

Ontario has had a long history of trying to nudge municipalities in this direction and say, "Let's build more basement apartments; let's build more secondary suites." And it hasn't always taken, so I think that this is a valuable component of the bill.

I think it's important that we assess its value, though. The number of units of housing that we'll get out of that change is modest. Calculations on how much of the demand for affordable housing that will address are pretty low. They're in the 5% to 10% range.

The other thing I think is worth noting is the analysis of those units where they have been created. The affordability is pretty uneven. Sometimes they're affordable; sometimes they're not. It's a little less than 50%, I think, in the last study that I looked at.

It's a good step. It's a small step, but it's useful. But I think the other question that you raise—which is, "How do we get to that missing middle? How do we create a little bit more density that actually is affordable?" I think one of the things that everybody who deals with this issue recognizes is that we don't get where we need to go without investing.

If we just look at the cost of land and bricks and mortar and labour, there isn't a way to build right now that is

affordable to the average Ontarian without some kind of investment to achieve that affordability. When I talk to developers, when I talk to advocates, when I talk to tenants, when I talk to academics, they all say the same thing: We need investment to bridge that gap.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you. I'm going to pass the rest of my question time over to Mr. Holland.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Holland.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I echo my colleagues around the table and thank you for being here to discuss this important bill and the future of housing for Ontario. As we know and as the member opposite stated, this is something that's been neglected for many years, and we can't wait any longer.

To speak to your comment with regard to why we are moving so fast, we simply don't have a choice. There's too many Ontarians that are without a home and with nothing in the immediate future to provide them with them, so we owe it to our residents to make sure that we act quickly to ensure that people can get the housing they need when they need it.

My question is to Alex here. I've heard comments today—particularly from John. You made the comment that reducing development charges is going to hinder development. I fail to see that.

We collectively have \$8.2 billion—municipalities collectively have \$8.2 billion—in development fees that they've collected sitting in reserve funds. Those development charges were intended to spur on development, to put the infrastructure in place to increase housing for Ontarians. Instead, it's sitting in a bank earning municipalities interest. This bill speaks to us requiring municipalities to spend at least 60% of development charges on infrastructure projects for future housing developments. I think that's a good thing.

We also have heard that there's the development charges—municipalities are going to lose a source of revenue. My question to you, Alex, is, in your opinion, do you see that increasing housing stock will actually increase assessment value for a municipality, thereby increasing revenue potential for a municipality outside of development charges? Probably it's a more sustainable source of revenue for a municipality. Rather than a one-time development charge, they're going to see yearly taxation revenue coming off some of the development that's being proposed by us requiring them to spend the development charges. Could you speak to that, please?

Mr. Luca Bucci: Just to clarify—the question was directed to me?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Oh, sorry. Yes.

Mr. Luca Bucci: Alex is my colleague, but no problem.

Simple math: The more homes that you have on the tax base, the more tax revenues you can generate. The more tax revenues you can generate, municipalities have an opportunity to see whether or not they can offset some of the—I'm not going to call them “losses,” but maybe we can say “foregone revenues”—from the development change regime that you guys are bringing in. Because the way that the industry sees it is that you're not really scaling

back development charges on new home construction; you're putting in a system where increases are being rationalized and increases are coming in at a rate that the industry and the new homebuyer can afford, right?

Again, we have seen exponential increases since June, in some cases up to 500%, on these charges. When you are dealing with a 500% increase on these charges, it's hard to account for that economically.

Our industry—as much as the perception is that we're motivated by profit, it costs money to build homes. We have to borrow that money, and we are obligated to pay back banks. At some point, there's only so much you can pay back before that money has to go back to the consumer, go back to the new homebuyer or gets passed off to the homebuyer.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you for that.

How much time do we have left?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): About one minute.

Mr. Kevin Holland: So just quickly, I have a question to Sean. You spoke about conservation authorities in reply to a question from the member opposite, with regard to their role. I don't think anybody is denying the role that conservation authorities have in providing input with regard to responsible development. My issue is the timing of it. Do you feel the timing for conservation input is at the time the official plans are being developed that indicate the type of development for a community, or when a development is actually taking place? Personally, I think the role for conservation authorities is for input at the time that official plans are being developed. Every five years, we're required to do an official plan review, and at that time there can be input provided as well.

1050

Because what we're seeing right now is the ability for—conservation authorities are really hindering development at the time that development is looking to be taking place. When do you think is the appropriate time for conservation authorities to provide that input to municipalities?

Mr. Sean Meagher: When we look at the structure of the way we approve development, all municipalities create official plans. They're big, broad, general documents that lay out, roughly, how do we want to do this, in a big, broad brush strokes kind of way—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize. The time has come up.

We'll have to move to the official opposition. MPP Burch?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I think I'd like to give Mr. Meagher from Ontario for All a chance to finish his answer to that question.

Mr. Sean Meagher: That's very kind. Thank you. We also have secondary plans and zoning, so that as we get to the refined points of any development, we make sure that what was generally in the official plan actually suits the situation. Conservation authorities work the same way. They engage in the official plans, they do those broad

brush strokes, but at the time that you're developing, the specifics can matter and it's useful to have them involved.

I think it's worth noting that this bill doesn't just change the timing of participation for conservation authorities. It also constrains the scope of things that they can express concerns about, and that creates real risk for our natural environment, if they're not looking at the whole scope of the impact of a development.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions, MPP Burch?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Yes. I just want to shift over to the Ontario Home Builders' Association for a moment. Mr. Bucci, a lot of the housing legislation that the government has come forward with seems to be directed at municipalities and the kind of time that it takes municipalities for approvals. I think there are some legitimate points that have been raised in some time limits that have been set.

But not so long ago, Ontario's Big City Mayors released some statistics that there were about 250,000 units of housing at the time that had already been approved. So they had already gone through the municipal approval process, they've taken up the time and resources at municipalities, and action wasn't taken by the developers and builders on it. That's a substantial amount of housing. Don't you think it's fair that if we are blaming municipalities for the problem, that we're also taking a look at developers and perhaps putting a sunset clause on approvals, so that developers actually have to move rather than speculate and delay building?

Mr. Luca Bucci: It's a great question. I'm very, very familiar with the Ontario's Big City Mayors talking point that we were sitting on a lot of these undeveloped units. In most cases, these undeveloped units are undeveloped because we're still waiting on comments from provincial regulatory authorities. Even though we do have the permits, we are waiting for servicing to be brought into the site, and that's being held up by, again, commenting bodies at both the municipal and provincial level and at the conservation authority level.

In a situation where you're in a crisis and there's such a demand for housing, our industry is motivated to build the housing. We're not sitting on these lots because we want to speculate; I can't say that to a 100% degree, but for the majority of the cases, we are still waiting on comments from provincial agencies, federal agencies, municipal agencies and conservation authorities before we can get to work. Just because you have a permit doesn't mean that you can start building.

So what I would like to close with is that even as part of our advocacy, we asked the government to look at all processes, not just municipal processes. We said, "This is a problem that is happening at all levels of government. There are commenting agencies that are taking a lot of time." In our five-point advocacy plan, we said that the government needs to look at the municipalities and within their own government, in their commenting agencies, to make sure that these processes are streamlined, so we're not sitting on undeveloped lots and we can get building faster.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I appreciate your perspective. Just to be clear, the big city mayors did indicate that most of the problem had to do with speculation, and so I assume that you disagree with the—

Mr. Luca Bucci: I think that is probably the one point where our industry and Ontario's Big City Mayors would have a bit of a disagreement. Some of the members I have talked to, in situations where they are sitting on permitted lots, are waiting for comments from either the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of the Environment or a conservation authority before they can move through with their development.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Okay. I'd like to go to Mr. Meagher with the same question. Also, how much does speculation play into the problem that we have with housing supply in general and affordable housing?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think we run into a whole bunch of problems with the economics of housing, as Tanya pointed out, if we're not investing in making affordability happen. I understand that there are lots of causes for developers to be sitting on top of lots; the Big City Mayors have done a lot of analysis of this. They're certainly identifying speculation as a big issue. We're talking about, just in the GTA, a quarter-million homes. There are a lot of units that are not being built, and so the idea that we just need to accelerate the approvals and homes will pop up everywhere is hard to justify, given the actual data on the ground.

I think that that's one of the things that's really important about the task of slowing down and thinking about this properly—and not slowing down for years, but slowing down long enough to do the math. How many, exactly, of these units are held up by speculation versus approval processes? We don't really have an answer to that question that's detailed enough. Let's make our decisions about important issues like affordable housing based on real data, not on talking points. I completely agree with the home builders' association on that point: Let's get the real numbers and find out what the actual barriers are.

But certainly one of the barriers is that we've had an enormous amount of inflation in housing costs, because there's not enough labour, there are not enough materials. We've been upzoning, trying to use the market to find a way to lower the costs, and it hasn't worked. Land prices have skyrocketed. Every time we increase the density, the land price increases to match, and the price of houses, of homes, continues to go up.

What we need is a system that is like the one that they use all across the United States, where we tie those benefits to a specific obligation to deliver affordable units, and we make the necessary investments to bridge the gap between costs and what people can afford.

Mr. Jeff Burch: The government's own Housing Affordability Task Force pretty clearly identified that the provincial government wasn't keeping up proportionately with the federal government when it comes to investments in social housing. Is it possible to address the issue of affordable housing or housing in general without having

some kind of a strategy around social housing and investing in those solutions?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think the evidence all over North America is that we do need to invest in a strategic way to bridge those gaps. You can't just buy your way out of this willy-nilly, but it's those strategic investments and a coherent plan for that, and it's really important that the province of Ontario play a big role in that.

We talked about that. The housing task force talked about that, but so does the region of Peel. We have a great representation from Peel regional MPPs here. But the region of Peel master plan for affordable housing relies on all three levels of government investing. The cities and the regional government can invest because they have the revenues from development charges that they're going to lose, and the province of Ontario needs to be a full partner in that. That's what the folks on the front line trying to solve affordable housing are asking for.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. That concludes our time for the first group of presenters. I would like to thank all three presenters for coming today. We appreciate your presentations.

FUTURE MAJORITY

MR. FELIX VORTSMAN

BRAMPTON ENVIRONMENTAL
ALLIANCE

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Now I would like to call upon the next group of presenters: Future Majority, Felix Vortzman and the Brampton Environmental Alliance. Can you please come forward?

Future Majority, if you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Ottavia Paluch.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may go ahead.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Okay. Thank you, Chair. My name is Ottavia Paluch. I'm a first-year student at the University of Toronto Mississauga, and I'm here this morning with Future Majority. We are a non-partisan organization that elevates youth priorities to the agenda.

I joined the Future Majority team as a volunteer about six months ago, so this is the first time I've actually gotten involved with politics. I've also never spoken in front of this many people who have the power to make things happen before. Like, how cool is that?

Interjection.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Well, thanks. I appreciate that.

As exciting as it is for me to be up here today, I'm also really scared. I'm going to be completely honest. I'm scared to be up here, all by myself, because those are the rules. My team isn't allowed to be up here with me today. I'm scared you're going to ask me questions that I don't know the answers to. And I'm scared for the future, especially if this bill is passed the way it is currently written,

creating problems for communities trying to respond to climate change and affordability.

1100

Specifically, today we're asking that you amend this bill so that it doesn't override council-approved green and sustainable design standards that include energy efficiency. To be clear, that means we want municipalities that already have green development standards or green design standards in place to be able to continue to enforce those guidelines. On top of that, we want to give municipalities the power to pass new guidelines if they so choose.

Now, I grew up quite oblivious to the effects of climate change. At home, whenever the topic came up, my parents would usually say something along the lines of, "Whatever. We're all going to die anyway." Yet as mentions of climate change increased in the news, in my elementary and secondary school classes and also on social media, it began to feel increasingly impossible to ignore. It began to dawn on me that my future was no longer promised, that the future of my generation and the generation after mine was no longer promised. It felt harrowing and scary and sad. I remember being invited to go to my first Future Majority event and being unsure if there was even much of a point in getting involved. But being in that room, surrounded by all of these young people from all sorts of different socio-economic and political backgrounds, coming together for a common cause—that meant something. Something really shifted for me that day.

My friends and I were really surprised to learn of the enormous impact of buildings on the climate crisis. That's right. Canada's energy regulators' most recent statistics state that buildings are the second-largest emitting sector in the province. And in my hometown of Mississauga, their 2021 climate action plan determined that buildings are the number one emitter. We've been so stoked to learn that, in response, municipalities across Ontario have been making big strides on climate and affordability, and we would love to see that incredible momentum continue.

What we're asking for today is not particularly radical or revolutionary, but Bill 23, as it is currently written, will make it much harder to implement council-approved green and sustainable design standards in municipalities across Ontario that include energy efficiency.

Young people recognize, of course, that we cannot focus solely on the climate crisis, because the housing crisis is a whole other ballgame, and it's all too real. But here's the thing: Affordability and energy efficiency are not enemies. Better-insulated homes keep heat and cool air from leaking out, saving residents huge amounts of money on energy bills. Low- and no-carbon heating and cooling systems like heat pumps and high-efficiency appliances—those things shield residents from increasingly volatile gas prices. We also need to ensure that the 1.5 million homes we're building through this bill don't need retrofitting within a decade or two, because that cost is going to fall to our generation.

We are young people. We care about our province and our country's well-being, as well as its present and its future. We're not policy experts, so we're referring to the

Atmospheric Fund's expertise in this space. We suggest that you refer to the open letter that they've written in response to this bill. They offer an amendment that will guarantee municipalities the power to implement green and sustainable design standards across Ontario without impacting the government's goals to get homes built quickly.

I can speak from experience: Youth have enough on our plate. We're counting on our political leaders to show leadership on climate, because we have exams to write. We do not have time for hurricanes.

And let me tell you, week after week, I'm left breathless, in awe of the energy of my incredible teammates on the Future Majority team—how fired up we are to change things and fix things, and how stoked we are to save the planet in our own, small, passionate, powerful way. That brings me so much hope.

It brings me so much hope to show you that behind me, we've brought a legion of young people to today's hearing. If you guys wouldn't mind standing up—

Interjection.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Yes, give it up. Listen—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Order.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I would just love it if we all took a second and just absorbed the power of this moment. Just look at us. Look at how cute we are. How could you possibly say no to our demands? This is what a youth movement looks like.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: One minute, sir?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Okay. This is why I've taken a day away from classes. This is why my friends, teammates and I have been calling other folks, young folks, all week and encouraging them to call you directly with the same message that I've provided today.

We are asking that you modify this bill so we can get back on track to meeting our climate emissions targets. We are asking that you modify this bill to make sure hard-won municipal climate policies aren't reversed overnight. We're asking that you modify this bill just a little teeny, tiny bit so that it doesn't override council-approved green and sustainable design standards in municipalities across Ontario that include energy efficiency.

Because this is a once-in-a-generation bill that's going to set the table for the next several decades, and my generation, alongside young people all over this province—we are counting on you. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for your presentation.

We will next move on to Felix Vortsman. If you could please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: Good morning. My name is Felix Vortsman. I would like to thank the committee members and all participants for the opportunity to present to all of you today. I am a real estate investor, landlord, real estate investment coach and realtor exclusively focused on investment in rental properties across the entire greater

Golden Horseshoe region and beyond. I appear before you today mainly in my capacity as an Ontario small landlord and real estate investor, and am therefore representing thousands of small landlords across the province who provide affordable housing options and rentals to approximately five million Ontario residents, which is approximately one third of Ontario's population.

I personally own and operate approximately 120 rental units across several municipalities within the greater Golden Horseshoe and Kingston and therefore have intimate boots-on-the-street knowledge of the challenges being faced by small and mid-size landlords and investors broadly across the greater Golden Horseshoe region, as well as municipal-specific challenges that we continue to face.

Unfortunately, Bill 23 fails to address those challenges, as it mainly serves to address new-build real estate developments, which are now oppressively expensive for both end-user homebuyers and investors alike, while at the same time largely failing to consider the challenges being faced by small landlords and investors with respect to our single-family-to-multi-family conversion efforts, including inconsistent interpretation and application of the Ontario building code, especially part 11 of the OBC, by each respective municipality across the province; overly onerous, impractical and at times very costly, yet needless, stipulations in the OBC with respect to the various aspects of the single-family-to-multi-unit conversions by small investors—as most large land developers and builders largely do not operate in this arena—and yet we small landlords are the ones who are providing roofs over the heads of one third of Ontario's population; excessive red tape and wait times to get our plans approved and permits issued for single-family homes to legal two- and even three-unit—and, by the way, there's also the potential of up to five units—conversion projects, including continuing pervasive municipal NIMBYism that we continue to face in several municipalities across the province, such as:

- arbitrary and inconsistent maximum or minimum areas of space available to create one or more accessory dwelling units;

- arbitrary, onerous and inconsistent minimum parking requirements, including allowances or restrictions pertaining to tandem parking for each unit;

- arbitrary or inconsistent minimum or maximum setback requirements with respect to any garden suites or laneway housing;

- inconsistent application and interpretation of the OBC by municipal building and planning departments and their respective building inspectors;

- property insurers' insistence that they know more about electrical work conducted as part of such ADU conversion projects than the applicable ESA itself, further increasing the scope of work and cost to complete our ADU projects.

By the way, I have pioneered the conversion of single-family homes into three legal ADUs, instead of the typical two ADUs, using only the existing building envelope, within the province of Ontario, which I'm sure most committee members here are likely not aware was even

possible. And yet I, along with several of my clients and colleagues, have been completing such projects for over the past four years.

Furthermore, investors such as myself and my clients and colleagues who continue to create three-unit ADUs out of an existing single-family home detached dwelling are able to create three new housing units at significantly lower cost than the proposed new-build options contained within Bill 23. We can do so typically within six to nine months from start to finish, which is substantially faster than any similar new-build proposed projects, which require at least two to three years to complete, if not longer, given substantial ongoing red tape at the municipal levels of government.

1110

Based on my own personal knowledge and experience, to date only one municipality in all of Ontario allows for three ADUs to be completed using only the existing building envelope of a single-family home. Even then, the region for that municipality still mandates two separate building permits to be issued concurrently to enable waiving of applicable city development charges with respect to these projects, which results in further costly delays to the investors looking to complete such units.

These are only a few examples of the challenges we continue to face that are ultimately only causing further very costly delays and confusion among investors, building department personnel and other key stakeholders with respect to what exactly is the correct application of the Ontario building code, and specifically as it applies to such retrofit and ADU projects that we small landlords and investors continue to undertake. The numbers simply no longer work for the vast majority of any other real estate investment strategies available to us.

Furthermore, while the proposals made under Bill 23 are certainly constructive, they are nevertheless substantially overdue, as these should really have been implemented at least 15 to 20 years ago. Unfortunately, Bill 23 proposals are now largely way too little, too late to make any meaningful difference in our ongoing lack of affordable housing crisis, for the following reasons:

—the vast majority of small landlords and investors, most of whom our provincial government has largely taken for granted and largely ignored, but yet has nevertheless been relying on to almost exclusively provide the vast majority of new rental stock to the market over the past 40-plus years, can no longer make a business case to buy any new pre-construction units to rent out any longer, as doing so would result in at least \$1,000 to \$3,000 or more in monthly negative cash flow for any investor dumb enough to buy such pre-construction housing in today's market;

—our elected officials need to understand the different between real estate speculators and true real estate investors and landlords.

Real estate speculators exclusively focus on either organic real estate appreciation or via a flip to generate a quick profit. Speculators rarely intend to hold onto their real estate purchases for the long term. Conversely, real

estate investors and landlords are business owners and operators. They are more concerned with whether they can either make a business case for buying any new incremental unit of housing to rent out—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: —or whether it makes sense to continue operating their existing real estate holdings. As a result, they generally tend to hold on to their properties for the long term, unless market or highly onerous regulatory restrictions force them out of the market, and especially if they can no longer continue making their business case to hold on to their real estate portfolios within our province.

The concept of real estate price appreciation is mainly only relevant to true real estate investors and landlords insofar as whether such appreciation enables them to pull out equity through refinancing their existing properties to enable them to redeploy those funds to either buy or create more rental stock, which is a net benefit to new affordable housing creation in our province. Conversely, they can choose to redeploy those funds into other income-producing active businesses and investment endeavours that may or may not be within the real estate arena or are still within the real estate arena but outside of the province, which is a net detriment to the provision of more affordable housing within our province.

The current ongoing real estate market correction, as a direct result of quickly escalating mortgage rates—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize. That concludes your time.

We'll have to move on to Brampton Environmental Alliance now. Please state your name for the record and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. David Laing: Good morning, Chair Sandhu, and members of the committee. Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak with you this morning. My name is David Laing and I'm here representing the Brampton Environmental Alliance, or the BEA. The BEA is a not-for-profit organization. I'm their president. It's a volunteer position; I'm not paid to be here.

The purpose of the BEA is to help Brampton along its path to be a sustainable community. A sustainable community is a place that is healthy and resilient economically, environmentally and socially; a place where people want to live and work, both now and in the future. Beyond basic needs of food, clean air, water, a livable climate, safety, job opportunities and affordable shelter, people want a community that is vibrant and aesthetically pleasing, with opportunities for health and happiness. Nature and easy access to natural surroundings is a big component of human health and happiness.

Jane Goodall, the famous primate ethnologist, once said, "Let us recognize that the health of people, animals and the environment are connected. Let us show respect for each other, for the other sentient" beings "and for Mother Nature."

Achieving health and happiness is all about economic, social and environmental balance, and therein lies the problem with Bill 23. Bill 23 is not environmentally or

socially balanced, especially when placed in the context of other provincial government actions such as:

- backtracking on the promise not to touch the greenbelt;
- plans to re-carbonize Ontario’s electricity grid through gas plant expansions;
- cancelling renewable energy projects;
- spending millions fighting the federal government’s carbon-pricing model, even though many economists, including Canada’s own Ecofiscal Commission, recognize carbon taxation as an effective and inexpensive approach to reducing carbon pollution; and
- opting for a nuclear “notwithstanding” clause tool to fend off legitimate strike action.

Under this bill, parkland will be compromised, natural habitat such as forests and wetlands will be compromised, watershed quality will be compromised, farmland and food security will be compromised, species at risk will be compromised, housing standards will be compromised—all this so that the government can say it is cutting red tape, taking bold action to provide more affordable homes. It’s not balanced when the only people who seem to be happy with this bill are the developers and construction companies.

Yes, we need to add more people to the Canadian economy. Yes, we need to find affordable places where everyone can live. But we must do it sustainably, maintaining balance economically, socially and environmentally.

And there are options to the development free-for-all that this bill would create. Land use management experts, far smarter than I, say that we can accommodate the population growth for decades to come, staying within existing urban boundaries and without having to sacrifice greenbelt or environmentally sensitive areas. It would take a little more density and resetting expectations to counteract the demand for urban-suburban sprawl-type development that is not realistic, not affordable and not sustainable. It would take challenging developers who have been sitting on large tracts of land, sometimes for decades. In many cases, it’s the developer delay rather than municipal or conservation authority red tape. I’ve been told that Brampton alone has over 13,000 permits waiting to be pulled by developers. I assume that means that the projects are ready to go except that the developer is waiting for the right market timing.

Let’s modify Bill 23 to challenge developers, builders, municipalities, conservation authorities and other stakeholders to be more creative with the land, to encourage the creation of livable cities and compact, connected communities that will generate higher revenues per hectare at a lower servicing cost per hectare and facilitate smaller commutes, more greenspace, lots of recreational activities, and healthier, happier people.

I implore you to please bring Bill 23 into social, environmental and economic balance by allowing conservation authorities to continue to be an integral part of the development and review process, committing to protecting municipal green development standards that are at risk due to changes in the site plan process, committing to a

policy statement that ensures that there is no loss of wetlands in Ontario and, finally, providing resources to municipalities to address staffing gaps due to the down-loading of natural heritage roles from the conservation authorities and the province.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for your presentation. We’ll start this round of questions—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP McGregor has a point of order.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Sorry. I won’t be partaking in any of the lines of questioning. I just want to get it on the record: Even though we disagree on the bill, I just want to thank David Laing for being here. I appreciate everything you do for our city. Thanks.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. That’s not a valid point of order, but we’ll take that.

We’ll start the first round of questions with the government side. MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would like to start by saying, for the Future Majority team, I’m very happy to see you are here. I want to make sure that this is in the record. You are the future majority, but the most silent part of the majority. I’m very glad to see a youth group taking the opportunity to let us hear them. Yes, absolutely, you are the future. You are going to be affected by this bill and other bills we do. But again, I would call for you to take over your responsibility to let us hear your voice. That’s why I’m very glad to see all of you here and I hope to see you all the time in every hearing we do. This is remarkable.

First, before I put the question, I would like to bring your attention to a point: The housing crisis we are meeting today has been going on for many years. It’s not happening today; it’s been happening for many years, and no actions have been taken. And now we are where we are, and we have to take some bold actions to meet your needs, which is: Very soon, you are going to be looking for a house.

1120

My question is: Don’t you see, in this bill, any positive side in growing the capacity to be able to meet your needs in the very, very near future?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: First of all, I want to thank you for those kind words. It means a lot for me, and I know for the rest of the team it means a lot. We’ve worked very hard in the last six months, trying to gain momentum on proposing a green development standard that works. I’m from Mississauga. We’ve pushed the city of Mississauga to try to influence those.

I understand the importance of housing, 100%. I would kill for a mansion in downtown Toronto right now, sir. I’m a young person, and that means I care deeply about housing, and I also care deeply about climate. Those two things can coexist; I don’t see them as enemies. And I’m clearly aware of the cost of housing, and I’m concerned about it. So are many of my friends.

Affordable housing and energy efficiency don't need to be in conflict. We can have both. Honestly, I think GDS is going to—it makes homes more attractive in a sense. The more that we implement these laws into municipalities, the better off we're going to be as a province. That's my total belief.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Are you aware that the cycle now from getting developers to take over land to the day the unit is available for sale is 11 years? Like, if you picked an area today, you are most probably not going to be buying in it, because you can't wait for 11 years to buy. Are you aware of that?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Sir, I'm not going to comment on housing specifically, because that's not my expertise. I understand there are much smarter folks who know a lot about housing and about the crisis that has been going on forever—since I was born, honestly. My focus today is on climate and on implementing green and sustainable design standards in the municipalities across Ontario.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: This government already did some steps to meet our net-zero commitments to reduce emissions according to the Paris accord, and we have an initiative of net zero. Are you aware of that, too?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I think it's awesome that the legislators are coming together and taking action on climate. I think that's amazing. You are standing up for the future of our planet and for the future of my generation and the generations that come after. I think that's fantastic.

That being said, this is an awesome extra step to take. There is an opportunity right now. There is an open window for municipalities to move quickly on climate. We are in a race against time. It's urgent that we take action. Many municipalities already have green development standards in place. This is something we can build off of what has already been done by the Legislature. It does not make sense to just end it there. We need all the action that we can possibly get. We need everything we can throw at climate from the government. We need all hands on deck. It's that important, it's that crucial and it's that necessary to our survival.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much. I will pass the rest of my time to my colleague Laura.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank everyone for being here, including the wonderful youth in the back of the room. I encourage your enthusiasm and appreciate you being here.

This one, through you, Mr. Chair, is to Felix: Bill 23 takes bold action, absolutely, and this new bill would remove, let me see, site plan control requirements for projects with fewer than 10 units. You talked about the complications in building and approvals and NIMBYism. In your opinion, how would this new bill increase housing for the landlords in your position and in your business case, given that in this bill up to three residential units would be permitted as of right without needing a bylaw amendment?

Mr. Felix Vortsman: The bill does not go far enough, to begin with. The third unit typically relates to a garden

suite. As I indicated in my opening remarks, I'm able to create three units out of a single-family home using just the existing building envelope, which means that opens up the door for, potentially, an additional two units on the same lot line to increase densities even further.

We're already required to upgrade water lines. If given the opportunity to increase that density further, we'd be more than happy to pay for the upgrades to the sewage lines as well on these properties.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: The challenges we're facing right now are predominantly at the municipal level. I'll give you an example: In the city of Niagara Falls, the requirements that they basically impose are totally NIMBYistic. They only allow a maximum of 40% of the main floor space as your accessory dwelling unit, which means that nobody in their right mind is producing secondary suites in Niagara Falls, from my perspective.

Ms. Laura Smith: Sorry; could you repeat that last statement? I just barely heard it.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: It basically means that nobody in their right mind, as investors, is creating secondary suites in Niagara Falls right now under the current restrictions imposed by the municipality. They're literally flipping the bird to the Ontario government, basically saying—and I've gone through this process with the committee of adjustments there, where there's a city councillor sitting at the committee of adjustments who clearly has a conflict of interest because he has stakes in a number of hotels in the area. This was back in 2017. Everybody on the committee of adjustments—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize for cutting you off. We'll continue that in the second round.

We'll move to the opposition side now for their first round. MPP Burch?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to thank you all for your presentations today. I'm going to go right to Ottavia from Future Majority. Thank you and all the young people that showed up today. It's very refreshing to see you all take part in this process.

I want to go right to conservation authorities, and I'm not going to pull any punches. This bill guts conservation authorities. It takes away their scope. It removes them from the planning process. It really sees conservation authorities as an impediment, and you, I think very accurately, outlined that conservation and housing don't have to be opposites. They don't have to be in conflict with each other. And it even goes so far as to require conservation authorities to identify land that houses can be built on, which is the exact opposite of conservation.

Did you want to comment on what you think of that part of the bill in terms of the sustainability that you mentioned earlier?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: First of all, sir, thank you. Again, I really appreciate the support in this room for young people's voices. It does mean a lot to me and to the team.

Conservation authorities do a lot of great work. I can't speak to their work, on specifics. My team's focus is on

youth voices in the province of Ontario. We're doing our part to make sure that climate action is taken. Of course, there are so many other fantastic organizations like The Atmospheric Fund that I brought up in my notes. They've written an open letter about GDS that we'd love for all of you to take a look at. It's things like that. We need all of the support we can get on climate, young people especially, and that's why we're here: to represent youth voices on climate.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you very much. Once again, I really appreciate you being here.

I want to switch over to Mr. Laing from Brampton Environmental Alliance. We haven't had a chance to speak yet. Same general question on the approach to conservation authorities: What will the long-term effects of that be, as an approach to the housing issue?

Mr. David Laing: The conservation authorities provide that element of balance. Right now they have hydrologists, ecologists—a lot of scientific expertise which is focused on a particular watershed or watersheds. As we all know, watersheds don't conform to municipal boundaries, so you have to take a look at a watershed in a holistic way. They provide that level of expertise and guidance to both the developers and the municipalities to ensure that the proper designs are done, that the proper elements are preserved to preserve habitat and other elements of the natural world. It is a give-and-take, and it's always going to be a give-and-take if it's going to be done in an appropriate way.

There may be ways of being able to speed up that process, but to eliminate that process would be a mistake because you then have people that either don't know all of the ramifications making the decisions about the land use, or you have to duplicate in the municipalities all of that expertise so that those people that are part of the planning process can still have access to that expert opinion or that expert information.

1130

So it's either going to be more costly or it's going to be deleterious to the quality of life going forward for decades, and there is no real way to recover from that.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you. I also wanted to ask you: Recently in the news we've read about the greenbelt, and we know that the Premier promised not to touch the greenbelt. And here we are, taking hundreds of acres out of the greenbelt for housing and development.

I want to get your general thoughts on that. You're probably aware of the concept of biodiversity offsetting, which we dealt with in the Niagara region, where they actually thought that they could build on a wetland and then re-create this wetland in another area, which was a preposterous concept. They're kind of talking about doing the same thing with the greenbelt.

Shouldn't the greenbelt be in perpetuity rather than just kind of at a whim when we want to build houses?

Mr. David Laing: Absolutely. There were a lot of very smart people that went into planning where the greenbelt should be. I can't defend individual parcels of land, but I have to rely on that expertise that went into it.

The bigger problem in my mind is that once you open up the door to say that certain parcels of land within the greenbelt can be repurposed for some other thing, that basically gives existing landowners in the greenbelt the hope that they may be able to sell their lands at a higher price to developers at some time in the future. It also gives developers the wrong message, then, that by lobbying hard enough, they can get additional greenbelt lands to be opened up. So it's a thin edge of the wedge which ultimately—

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Point of order, Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Point of order?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I believe that the discussion of the greenbelt is not part of the bill, so I would like to refocus our attention on the components of the bill.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. This is not a valid point of order, but I'll encourage all members to speak on the bill and focus on the bill. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm interested in you finishing your answer, since the greenbelt and conservation authorities and housing is all tied up with this bill—

Mr. David Laing: Yes.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Yeah. Go.

Mr. David Laing: I will just finish by saying that I think what it means is it opens up the door to other parcels of land being taken away from the greenbelt in the future, and it ultimately signals the demise of the greenbelt. It's that serious.

Mr. Jeff Burch: How much time do I have left, Chair?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Fifty seconds.

Mr. Jeff Burch: You commented on the issue of speculation and the approved housing units that are not built. Is that a problem in the Brampton area, that there are developments that have been approved but not acted on?

Mr. David Laing: I can't speak to specifics. Just taking a look at the number of residential unit permits that are available—and I know that Mr. Bucci said earlier today that it wasn't so much speculation, but I think you were the one that said that we don't have the proper facts, and so we really don't know. All I know is that I'm a businessman and I would—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We will move to the independent members now. MPP McMahon?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you everyone for coming in and taking the time—especially the youth. Wow, what a breath of fresh air to see you here today. Thank you for coming and missing your exams or study period, whatever you're doing. And congratulations. I sure as heck wish you were around when I was a Toronto city councillor. I could have used your help.

To Ottavia, kudos to you for having the courage to come here. It's very intimidating. I remember my first time speaking to Toronto city council when I was crusading for

the pesticide bylaw, and I was much older than you. And it's harrowing, so you've done a great job.

I want you all to know that what you're doing matters. Youth voices are so important. They're not at the table; they're rarely at the table. So I encourage you to continue to pick your passion and run with it, because it's your future and you actually hold the balance of power. So, great work—and I look forward to seeing you more often. Now to Ottavia: In your mind, why is it important to build sustainably, to build environmentally sound housing?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I appreciate the kind words.

So much is at risk. Again, housing is so important, but so is climate. Let's be real; we don't want eternal hurricane seasons, we don't want flash flooding, we don't want—it's awfully important. Many young people in this province care deeply about climate. I can speak for myself and for my friends on the team; that's why we're here—because we care, and we want to have a seat at the table. Youth voices matter, climate matters, and these voices on climate matter. We're paying attention.

This bill is getting attention, but, specifically, our amendment to implement green and sustainable design standards across Ontario is not, and that's why we're here; we want to bring it to light. We're paying attention, and so are thousands of others. This isn't going to cost a lot. It's not a particularly big deal. It's a simple amendment. We just want municipalities to have the power to fight climate change on their own terms. That's why I feel it's deeply important.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: We have the Toronto Green Standard, and it's the gold standard, a role model. It's one of the best across the country and, I would argue, North America. I was on council when we voted for it—as well as the Premier, who voted supportively for it. So we have this, but we don't have green standards all the way across every municipality in Ontario. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on that. Should we roll that out across Ontario, to every municipality?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Yes, 100%, every municipality that wants to get on board with this absolutely should. That's why we're asking for you to make that amendment, so that they can. Obviously, they're going to have that choice—if they want to get tornadoes thrown at them, sure. It's so important, again, that we fight climate change and that municipalities—local action is so much more important than we realize. And you guys, as provincial members of Parliament, have the power and the opportunity to change things, to fix things, and to save our planet.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Not only do we want municipalities that already have GDS in place to try to improve them—but also new ones that haven't gotten on board with it, we want them to step up and make that difference.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: In less than a minute: What worries you and your group, and what gives you hope?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: What worries me is lack of action. This is such an important moment in our country's

history and our province's history and the cities' and municipalities' histories.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And what gives you hope?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: What gives me hope is young people. Young people are so crucial to the fight against climate change. We're the ones who are going to have to be living with it, with the decisions that all of you make. It's so important. That's why we're here. We want to fight for that, because this is what we're going to have to be living with.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll start the second round of questioning with the opposition. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to all the presenters for coming here and sharing your unique expertise and experiences today. It's so valuable to have young people here and becoming politically engaged, staying politically engaged. It's very important.

My first question is to David Laing.

I also see this bill as being neither socially or environmentally sound; I have some considerable concerns with it. I do have some concerns with Bill 23's move to make it easier to build suburban sprawl on green space and farmland, and that is twinned with the government's recent decision to expand urban boundaries—to require municipalities to expand their urban boundaries to allow for development on green space.

Could you speak to your group's position on suburban sprawl within Peel, what you're advocating for, and what your concerns are?

Mr. David Laing: We advocated that the region of Peel should have maintained its urban boundaries, which came up in front of regional council, I think, in May of this year. In fact, I delegated and spoke to that issue and asked them to maintain it, the existing urban boundaries.

1140

One of the interesting things is that there is a clause in Peel's urban boundary plan that says that it's going to maintain farmland for as long as possible. The irony of this—and I pointed it out to the committee at the time—is that we are dependent for much of our food imports on places like California and Florida, who are experiencing significant climate change that is affecting agricultural production, and that's only going to increase in the future. Here in southern Ontario, we kind of live in a Goldilocks position with regard to climate. We are experiencing, in some respects, some of the benefits of the changing climate. However, we're also consuming our own agricultural land at a fast and furious rate, and by 2050, we may have just finished developing the last acres of the best farmland in North America at a time when we need local food security the most. So we need to be thinking about the future of our generation and the next generation and making good land use decisions, because land is the only thing that we have. That's important.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for raising your concerns. I believe the Ontario Federation of Agriculture shares many of them.

My next question is for Felix Vortsman. Thank you for coming in today.

I have some very specific questions, so I'm going to read them out, and then I'll give you time to answer them.

If you're looking at converting a single-family home into a triplex using the rules that Bill 23 has outlined—you need to keep the square footage; you've got to keep the height, unless you get municipal approval—what does that typically look like? What would be the square-foot size of the new units, typically? And what would be the average rent of these units? Paint a picture for me so we can better understand it.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: As I mentioned, there's only one municipality in all of Ontario that currently allows this, based on their interpretation of the building code—which is a deficiency within the building code, as well.

What do they look like? It really depends. Typically, they look like some sort of a single-family, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s type of bungalow—and I've done these in every single iteration you can think of: four-level backsplits, four-level sidesplits, raised bungalows. It could be a ranch bungalow with a two-car garage—a two-car garage converted into a one-bedroom unit. The smallest I've ever done is actually a single-car garage that's 234 square feet; I converted it into a full one-bedroom apartment. From a rental perspective, it's definitely less than any new-build project—I predominantly deal, currently, in Niagara region.

So the size of these units varies based on the size of the existing floor plan of the unit. There are certain rules we can bend, certain rules we can break—and I'm not saying it's illegal or anything like that; I'm talking about layouts—and there are certain things that are rigid. For example, we're not removing posts that are holding up the house. The size of which—anywhere from 234 square feet on the smaller side, which is a single-car garage, all the way to 1,400 square feet. They are significantly more affordable than any new-build project, because it costs us significantly less to create these units than any new-build product out there, because we're not paying to put in a foundation, we're not paying to build out the existing building envelope; we're using the structure right there and then. It may entail us moving furnaces and ACs in order to optimize our layouts. Some of these units could be as small as 234—two-bedroom, one-bedroom, four-bedroom units. It's an untapped resource, and it is probably the very lowest-hanging fruit that the government should be concentrating on, because it is significantly less costly to build, quicker to build and more affordable.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for explaining that to me.

Finally, my question is to Ottavia. Ottavia, I'd love to know a little bit more about your group, Future Majority. What other issues do you work on? How were you founded?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: As I said, I joined the team not even six months ago. I'm particularly new to the world of politics, to political organizing and to youth volunteering.

Jared Klein, who helped me with being up here today, is phenomenal. I'm sure he'd be happy to follow up with you on what we do as an organization.

What I've been accustomed to is focused on GDS and municipal climate policy.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Is Future Majority a group just in this area? Is it national? Do you work on different environmental issues or just green design standards? It would be good to know a little bit more.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: We are a national organization. I'm part of the Mississauga chapter. We have worked on other environmental issues. Our focus recently—since I've joined, essentially—has been on GDS, because the city of Mississauga has not implemented them, and we want them to be stronger on climate. The issue with Bill 23 is that it might take away that opportunity to have that call to action.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for explaining.

I'm very pleased that you're interested in this bill. It is a significant bill. These documents affect our lives, and I'm pleased that you know that—and we know that. It is extremely important that we work to change them. I look forward to seeing you being politically active in the future.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the independent members for the second round. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My first questions would be for David Laing from the Brampton Environmental Alliance. If I have time, I'd like to hear more about your group, but first off: Do you feel the conservation authorities have been doing a good job in protecting Ontarians and protecting Ontario lands, keeping them safe, over the years?

Mr. David Laing: Generally, yes. I think they provide that perspective on environmental challenges that are being faced by different development projects, and they can bring the right level of expertise to the table. The issue has been whether and when they get involved in a project and whether they have the amount of time necessary. I think it was you who said that it takes 11 years to get projects to development from the time that they're initially started. I'm sure there must be ways to cut that down. I am certainly aware of stories where the conservation authorities are either limited in their ability, just by the process, or excluded entirely—so that presents a challenge for them to be able to make their opinions known, with the right level of research.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yesterday, the minister mentioned several times that this bill helps to protect and manage wetland loss.

Could you please explain the impact this bill would have on wetland protections in Ontario?

Mr. David Laing: Right now, there's a provincially significant wetlands registry. I believe that there are something like 2,000 or more specific areas that are identified across a wide range of criteria, that identify the importance of that wetland and the ecological services it provides. My understanding of this bill is that it would effectively eliminate the "provincially significant wetland" designation and that it would treat wetlands no differently than any other—what is considered to be developable land. More

importantly, it would actually change the definition of “watercourse,” so that source water areas, which are typically wetland areas, would no longer be considered to be watercourses, so they would not be subject to the same level of protection as they have been previously.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What are your thoughts on building on flood plains?

Mr. David Laing: It’s a huge mistake—all we have to do is go back to 1954, Hurricane Hazel, and the number of lives lost as a result of allowing people to build on a flood plain.

We look at areas in Alberta where there were recent floods—Hinton, I think—and we see that where we allow people to build on flood plains, now, with climate change, a 1000-year storm is becoming a 100-year storm, and a 100-year storm is becoming a 10-year storm. That’s only going to get worse over time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. David Laing: Unless you’re going to do tremendous mitigation measures to prevent flooding in flood plains, property damage and loss of life is going to continue.

1150

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

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We will now move to the government side for their final round. MPP Kusendova.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good morning, everyone. I really want to commend Ottavia and her group for being here today. It does take a lot of courage. It brings me back to my first beginnings in Parliament. I was extremely nervous during my maiden speech, so I can certainly relate to those feelings.

I also want to give you hope. By looking around this table, you see some members of the younger generation present here as legislators, and also to encourage you and your group to seek political office in the future to continue your advocacy. We recently had a municipal election. A lot of the councillors were running uncontested. So there are opportunities for young people to get involved, because I think it’s so important that the next generation, our voices are reflected within governmental policies because, frankly speaking, the policies that governments will enact today will impact us for many, many years in the future.

Since you talked about climate and housing today, I would like to focus my comments there. I was wondering whether you know or your group knows, what is Ontario’s contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I am not a climate policy expert, unfortunately. I would love to ramble on to you about all the great stuff that this province has done for the climate. I’m more concerned about the future, what we can do on top of what has already been done. There is so much at stake. There is so much to do. There’s so much opportunity for action on climate in this province. I 100% stand by that. There’s always more action that we can take, always more precautions. We always have to keep building, moving forward, getting stronger on climate.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Absolutely. But I do think it’s really important for us to also be aware of the numbers, and that’s what I like to educate myself on. Actually, Ontario’s contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is about 0.2%. When we look at our country as a whole, Ontario is doing its part to meet our Paris accord standards. Ontario is actually the third-lowest per capita province in terms of our CO₂ emissions at 10.1 tonnes, in comparison to the Canadian average of 17.1 tonnes, which is 43% higher. The Canadian average is 43% higher than the Ontario contributions.

Why do I speak about this? Because I think it’s really important to understand the context which we are in. When we look at the housing market and when we look at house prices and how it varies across different provinces, Ontario has the second-highest average housing cost in comparison to other provinces. So right now—and these are 2020 numbers—Ontario is at about \$594,000 for the average cost of a home, in comparison to British Columbia, which is the highest at \$736,000. Meanwhile, Ontario has the third-lowest contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. We have the second-highest cost of housing. So there is a disconnect. Ontarians are doing their part to lower greenhouse gas emissions, yet we have the second-highest housing costs. So there is certainly an affordability issue.

As my colleague has mentioned previously as well, the government is supporting net-zero emission standards when it comes to the building code, so in terms of quality windows, doors and insulation, as well as in commercial; for example, replacing standard lighting with LED. So my question to you is, do you have any ideas or additional policies that you would recommend to the government to consider to make housing more affordable for future generations? Because right now, many people our age are actually living in their parents’ basement, in their thirties. They’re young professionals, have worked really hard, and they’re priced out of the market. We have a housing crisis, and climate change is extremely important. So how do we enact policies that will keep both of these issues in mind?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I can’t speak to housing in general. That’s not my expertise. There are people who have come here today and I’m sure in future hearings and past hearings who are going to speak to housing on a more in-depth level than I have. I understand there’s a crisis, 100%, and I’m glad the government is taking action on that. Again, my focus is on GDS. I don’t see it as a—I mean, housing, of course, and climate; neither of those things are partisan issues to me. I want to see all parties and all politicians standing up for both housing and climate, especially for climate. I don’t think this is a partisan issue at all.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I couldn’t agree more. Can you give us some examples of these green design standards that your group is speaking of that you would like councils to consider?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Right. So let me just pull up what I mentioned earlier.

You touched on this as well: better insulated homes, keeping heat and cool air from coming in, and that saves residents huge amounts of money; low-carbon heating,

things like that; cooling systems that shield residents from increasingly volatile and more expensive gas prices; heat pumps; high-efficiency appliances—those kind of things go a long way.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much, and thank you for your courage. Thank you to all of you for being here today, and I'd like to share the rest of my time with MPP Pang.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Pang?

Mr. Billy Pang: How much time do I have, sir?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute and 40 seconds.

Mr. Billy Pang: Okay, great.

Again, to the Future Majority: When I see your team, I'm so glad that you make me recall when I was younger, which was not too long ago.

Laughter.

Mr. Billy Pang: I was serving the community as a volunteer for vulnerable people like street kids, marginalized youth, cage-home seniors. They are all being challenged in the community, right?

I still remember 10 years ago, I was sitting at your seat at the hearing to present to the MPPs. Now I'm here. My feeling when I was younger was, "Okay, if I could be one of the legislators, I would try my best to make people live happier and healthier." Now I'm here listening to your presentation.

I loved your initiatives for taking care of the environment, but we have to deal with, as you mentioned, a lot of issues happening at the same time, no matter the environment and also the housing crisis.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): One minute left.

Mr. Billy Pang: So can you expand a little bit, because when we are dealing with so many issues—in your opinion, how can we help to get you a home, a place called home, earlier, faster and affordable?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Again, sir, I can't speak to housing. My focus is on climate. My team's focus is on climate, initiating and implementing green and sustainable development and design standards across Ontario. Housing is not my thing, unfortunately. There are a lot of other smarter folks who can speak to that. I would love to see more housing, of course. Something has to be done, but of course my focus is on climate and my team's focus is on climate.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Thank you. That concludes the time that we have for this round. We will put the committee in recess and return at 1 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1158 to 1300.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): I wanted to welcome everybody back to our afternoon proceeding of the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy. We will be resuming witness hearings. A note to the committee members: We originally had two presenters scheduled for today, but Debbe Crandall from the Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition had to cancel, unfortunately.

TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): That leaves us with our witness here today from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Could you please state your name for the record and then give your presentation? You have seven minutes. Thank you.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you. My name is John MacKenzie. I'm the CEO of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Thank you, John. You've got seven minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you and good afternoon. As I understand, it's Acting Chair McGregor—

Interjection.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Oh, now Acting Chair Pang? Okay, wonderful.

Good afternoon, Chair, and members of the committee. I really wanted to first say thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the committee today. As was mentioned, I am the CEO of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. It is the largest conservation authority in Ontario. I am responsible for the administration of that organization. We are a valued partner to the province and the communities we serve in the greater Toronto area. Since 1957, TRCA has been our region's first line of defence against natural hazards, providing vital programs and services that promote public health and safety, and protect people and properties, for the 21 municipalities who value and count on our support on a daily basis.

Our jurisdiction includes almost five million people, more than 10% of Canada's population, spread across nine watersheds from Mississauga, Brampton—where we're sitting today—and Caledon, going up north of Highway 9 into Mono and Adj-Tos, all the way over to Ajax and Uxbridge in the east, including all of the city of Toronto, all of Markham and large portions of Peel, York and Durham regions. And this includes the Etobicoke Creek watershed that we're on here today in Brampton.

In Brampton, in this part of the Etobicoke Creek, just as an example of what we do: TRCA is working with the city of Brampton and the region of Peel and stakeholders, including the province and the federal government, to daylight—to re-expose—streams that have been previously piped; to restore those streams; to protect new infrastructure and upgrade old infrastructure; to flood-protect downtown Brampton through our joint city and TRCA Riverwalk Project, which is a city-building project that will bring new major mixed-use developments, including thousands of units of housing into this urban growth centre and mobility hub.

We are doing this work with the provincial agencies, with the industry stakeholders and municipalities all across the GTA, and we work very well with them in a concerted effort to make things happen. We work to help realize housing, while protecting the environment and defensively protecting our communities from the hazards

that are upon us due to increasingly more extreme weather events.

With respect to this bill and proposed regulatory changes, TRCA is supportive of some of the streamlining provisions of the bill related to the CA Act, and we are actively working already to implement them or measures related to that. As a member of the conservation authorities working group, I and our representatives on the group from TRCA have worked with municipalities, the industry representatives and other CA representatives with the provincial team, under Minister Piccini at the time, to bring forward recommendations on regulations and to make positive changes. We would ask to be engaged again to help shape the regulations that are accompanying and running parallel to this bill to help make them better and to help make them pragmatic and to achieve our shared objectives.

Specific to the conservation authority provisions in this bill, TRCA has four specific requests for the committee today, and this would involve either the removal or amendments of certain clauses, which, if not removed or amended, will, in my professional planning opinion based on 30 years of experience working in the GTA, unequivocally create risks to our communities, impact the environment negatively, and frustrate growth and development by removing capacity from our municipalities in a time when the municipalities and industry need us most. Provincial agencies need us, now more than ever, to work together to make housing opportunities happen in the GTHA, and also to defensively protect our communities in this climate change crisis.

So request number 1 of these four—if you could please refer to pages 4 and 5 of my slide deck—is simple: Please remove subsection 3(2), on section 21.1.1(1.1), and subsection 4(2) of the bill, which restrict conservation authorities—restrict us—from providing vital services, including reviewing and commenting on proposals or applications under prescribed acts. This includes the Planning Act, the Environmental Assessment Act and other acts.

Or you can also amend it. Our municipalities want us to do this work, but you could also amend it to say, “unless there is an agreement with the municipality or infrastructure provider.” We have such agreements in place. Our municipalities want us to do this work, so please let them work with us, and continue to work with us, to do this work that we do for the province. We do this for Metrolinx. We do this for Waterfront Toronto. We do this for provincial agencies. Please let them continue to work with us. There are a lot of reasons for this. Without us at the table, there will be a major logjam in permissions in the GTA, which will actually run counter to the intent of this bill.

There are over 1,200 planning review permits every year. There are over 1,500-plus Conservation Authorities Act permits. There are over 500 EA infrastructure-related reviews that we do on behalf of our municipal partners—very important.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Forty-six seconds.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Request number 2: We strongly recommend that the government retain “pollution” and

“conservation of land,” so we can continue to protect provincial interests like wetlands and natural hazards from impact.

Request number 3—and please see page 7 of my presentation: We want to make sure that we have sufficient opportunity to review and comment on recommended conditions of approval, and if that takes place, we could potentially work on this amendment.

Request number 4: We want to make sure that there are some criteria added for when the minister can impose a freeze, and we want to have some maximum periods and to make sure that COLA, cost-of-living allowances, are protected for it.

Chair and members of the committee, I greatly appreciate you listening to my presentation, and I implore you to make these changes—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Time is up.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Thank you for your presentation.

For this round of questions, we will start with the official opposition. Ms. Bell?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I’d just like to start off by saying thank you to John MacKenzie for coming and speaking today. Would you like to finish your remarks?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you so much.

In conclusion—and I was trying to be conscious of time—Chair and members of the committee, I think that we have a world-class system present here today. People from all over the world—I accommodate tours from Asia, Europe, everyone—want to see how we’ve protected our communities and saved the taxpayers billions of dollars from the impacts that other jurisdictions are facing due to flooding. We have a great system. Yes, we can make it even better through the work of the conservation authorities group.

I believe what we need to focus on—and I refer to my last slide in my presentation—is implementation, where provincial leadership can help us implement existing plans. We can work with the province to bring infrastructure, but then make sure the owners and builders have agreements in place to create housing where it makes sense. We need catalyst infrastructure, like flood-protection infrastructure that could be built on provincially owned land. The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre is an example of something like that, where flood protection works that would then result in thousands of homes being able to be built on greyfield and brownfield properties nearby. For 10 years, we’ve been asking for lands to be committed from the province to support that project. But that’s one example; there are many others.

But more working tables—exactly like we’re doing on the waterfront; exactly like what we’ve done in some of our other communities—involving the province, involving all stakeholders: We can make great things happen together, if we focus on implementation, but we do have to amend some of these provisions in this bill, to make sure that happens in a way that makes sense for the greater Toronto area.

Thank you so much for the question. I'm happy to answer any other questions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Mr. MacKenzie, for coming in and providing a very practical and specific document that outlines the recommended changes, in amendment form, to this document, and also for your very clear request that your organization would like to be involved in the regulation-setting process so that this bill can be as good as it can be to protect our natural environment and protect people from flooding and extreme weather events. It makes a lot of sense to me, so thank you.

1310

I also share your concern, and I also firmly believe that Ontario can build the homes that we need and meet our growth and job targets while also protecting our natural environment.

One of the arguments I hear is that conservation authorities and municipalities do similar work and that municipalities can take on some of the responsibilities that conservation authorities already do. What's your response to that argument?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you for the question. I think we have done a great deal of work with the conservation authorities working group under Minister Piccini to help identify and streamline opportunities for more efficiencies. I think, already, there's good work under way. I know the memorandums of understanding that this government, through legislation, has prescribed conservation authorities and municipalities to enter into, related to development reviews, will further stipulate and make that even better in terms of streamlining.

I would say that right now it works quite well in the greater Toronto area. I hear from the industry stakeholders. TRCA has a BILD industry stakeholder working group that actually advances updates to policies and frameworks, and we collaborate together. I hear that in the greater Golden Horseshoe there's actually quite a good system right now.

We are looking to perhaps share some of that best practice with others. We have fairly sophisticated protocols and timelines in place. We have pre-application consultation meetings that happen, as an example, with the development industry at the outset of a project to make sure that we scope the right studies and make sure everyone is on the right track from the beginning, and I think that is also another important part of all of this. We need to know and the industry needs to know exactly what's required, as early as possible, so we can all achieve certainty to create the mixed-use housing projects and all the other great employment projects that are making this region so vibrant.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. If this bill goes ahead and is implemented as planned, how will it affect Toronto and its region?

Mr. John MacKenzie: In my professional planning opinion, I feel it will create undue risk in certain areas. I really feel that. It's just something that may have not been thought through in putting the bill together, that there is a great reliance by our municipalities—in particular the

near-905 municipalities. They do not have the capacity within their planning departments, within their development engineering departments, at this point in time. It speaks a little bit to your earlier question. They don't have the specialized expertise, they don't have the cross-watershed modelling and they don't have this information to look on a watershed basis to determine that if something happens up in the north end in Whitchurch-Stouffville, it's going to impact Markham, potentially, and Unionville, but that it's also going to impact the city of Toronto at the mouth of the Rouge River at Lake Ontario, and then eventually impact Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence Seaway. We have this information. We have this data. We can model it. We can provide that expert advice.

But it also relates to natural heritage. That's another important component of this. We have, since 1957, accumulated incredible scientific information about the bio-region that we live in and work in. That information can be leveraged to make sure that the best scientific and policy information is brought forward to help get to a solution quickly.

I think, to your question, that's what is a real issue.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Mr. John MacKenzie: There isn't that expertise within our municipalities. Some, like the city of Toronto, may have some environmental planning folks working on green design standards—and they're great. But we take our expertise and put it into those valleys that we own and are managed by the city and that we work together on, and the watersheds, to make sure that we bring that technical expertise, working on hazards and extreme weather events, and we bring that to bear.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. I certainly don't want a situation where thousands and thousands of homeowners and renters are finding that their basement is flooded because there wasn't appropriate water management and conservation management done at a higher level by municipalities and authorities. Thank you so much for your time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Thank you. This round is for the independent member. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you so much for coming in. It's great to have your presentation and to hear your thoughtful expertise and knowledge from over the years.

I have way too many questions for you, but I'll try to be quick. We already talked about the expertise in the municipalities, so I won't go there.

What parts of this bill are you most concerned about, in terms of potential risk and damage to the environment?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: I'm most concerned about two major areas. The first one that I laid out was the restriction that is proposed for us in working with our municipal partners. Currently, we have agreements with our municipal partners, with parts of the province—and I mentioned some of the agencies, like Metrolinx. We provide expert advice to them related to hazards and infrastructure. For example, are they sizing the culverts correctly if they're upgrading a rail line? If

they're building a new piece of infrastructure, we make sure, especially in the valleys and our regulated areas, that it's done in a way so that it's flood-proofed, future-proofed and resilient to extreme weather events. If we aren't doing that, with the modelling and with the expertise, and if municipalities aren't allowed to work with us on the natural heritage elements of that and other parts of the system—that all combined is one interrelated system.

If municipalities can't reach out to us and we can't comment on some of these major projects, it creates risks that we're going to put the wrong infrastructure in and it's going to have to be replaced. If you look at other jurisdictions—for example, out west, in BC, they're looking at having to spend \$9 billion-plus on the recovery from the last flood last year; in Alberta, it's over \$5 billion they've had to spend. In other jurisdictions across the world, they're expending so much money to adapt to this more extreme weather.

In Ontario, there haven't been as many costly, impactful floods, even recognizing how much growth has happened, and that is because, since 1957, conservation authorities and this conservation authority have been out there trying to protect and make sure that in those flood-vulnerable areas—we're protecting that. So that restriction on our work is one of the main things that I'm concerned about.

The second thing is, there is a clause right now related to how we issue permits, and it would change the basis for that; it speaks to changing it to bedrock and another criterion, but the conservation of land is an important test when we look at issuing a permit. So if someone comes in and they want to develop something or build something, we look at how it impacts lands—and when I say that, that includes wetlands, that includes forests and functions around the wetland. So if that test of conservation of land is taken out of the test for issuing a permit or reviewing a permit, that becomes a problem, because there is no other substitute for that. We are tasked with protecting wetlands, but if you take away conservation of land from the test, the wetland—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Mr. John MacKenzie: —could be in jeopardy, and the wetland could be potentially removed. So that other one is important. On pollution, I would be okay—and I've suggested that it could be sedimentation, it could be something else related to the type of pollution. It's usually water-related or erosion-related pollution. But on conservation of land—the removal of that is a very, very concerning thing to myself and to other conservation authorities across Ontario.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Does this bill keep you up at night?

Mr. John MacKenzie: If it's not amended, it will keep me up at night, partially because there are so many of our dedicated people in our conservation authority and I want to make sure that—and I actually agree with the intent of streamlining our review processes. I agree with elements of the bill that will help make it more transparent for us to

do our work. I'm fine with that. But I am concerned about someone not getting the right advice—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Time is up. Thank you.

This round is for the government. MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, John, for being here and for your presentation.

One of the biggest challenges that we have heard about and want to try to overcome is the NIMBYism. "Not in my backyard" politics is continuing throughout this whole process; we heard that, and the Premier mentioned it so many times as well. There is a consensus that we need to get more housing built in Ontario. However, that attitude coming from local municipalities or stakeholders is happening throughout the province, not just in the GTHA.

1320

What do you think we can do to streamline the process to get shovels in the ground faster? We have a target to meet: 1.5 million houses in the next decade. Do you think this bill would streamline the process to get the shovels in the ground as soon as possible?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: Thank you again for the question.

I believe there are elements of this bill that will help streamline the process. I do think, though, that the implementing regulations need to benefit from the input of experts. I mentioned the conservation authorities working group because it includes representation from BILD, it includes representation from CAs that are working in this field, it includes representation from municipalities and other stakeholders—the agricultural sector; for other parts of Ontario, that's a bigger issue. But in the GTA and everything, I think a smaller working group related to that or a subgroup of the conservation authorities working group could help to refine some of that, to help with that.

On NIMBYism: One of the things that I have found in my career, in trying to do a lot of intensification—I was a project manager for the West Don Lands project, where we built a flood-protection landform and increased density to help achieve the Pan Am village, when I was working for the province, with Ontario Realty Corp. and then Infrastructure Ontario. One of the things that I found is that making science understandable for people, as to why we're doing this, how important the benefits of housing in this location are versus putting it in another location which is going to result in additional fossil fuels and additional impacts to the environment—I think that's really important.

Conservation authorities work with municipalities to bring science to the table, to explain the benefits of certain projects. We are partners in infrastructure with the city of Brampton here, but all across the GTA, we work with our municipalities to bring science, to explain projects. In Scarborough, for example, some people didn't want the waterfront trail to go behind their houses, but we explained that if we do it the right way, it will be a net ecological benefit and a public benefit for the citizens and for the environment. So there's some explanation of science—I think that's part of it. But I think the bill can bring some

sites—they can perhaps make them shovel-ready a little bit quicker. But the regulations have to be right, because there are other parts of the bill that could be, if not amended, quite damaging, and they could actually, unfortunately, run counter to the intent of the legislation.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: We all agree that there is a housing crisis. More new Canadians are going to come to Canada, from the federal government's new announcement of 500,000 per year—as the Premier mentioned recently, 60% of those people are going to come to the GTA. So the crisis is across regions, but when it comes to bigger cities, we have to take action pretty soon.

In your opinion, what changes are most helpful for increasing the supply and especially the attainability of housing?

Mr. John MacKenzie: At this point in time, I think what is helpful are some provisions related to timing that we've talked about and which also were included in Bill 109, to make sure that all of the partners in the process are working together in a concerted manner, with some deadlines. Some of the timelines are very challenging, based on information—and I do believe that this bill and even Bill 109 implementation could benefit from making sure that all of the right information is provided by the development industry partners to the municipalities at the earliest possible stage so everyone can achieve this.

I have worked with some developers who come to the table in the GTA with all of the right information, before it's even asked for by the municipality. When I was a deputy city manager in Vaughan and planning commissioner in Vaughan, I had certain developers who could come to the table and get the approvals in 10 months, but other people would take 10 years, maybe 20 years, because they didn't do the right studies, because they kept trying to fight what was being asked for by every level of government. That's not the way to do it. Everybody has to come together in the process, and there needs to be as much information up front to achieve the timelines that I think this government is seeking. Everyone knows it's an urgent crisis, but we also have to remember that there are other considerations and provincial interests that have to be protected, like the climate crisis that we're all facing. So I do think that the timing provisions are helpful. I think it pushes everyone to get an outcome. But I think we just have to make sure that the regulations that come along and are implementing some of these things—are important.

I am concerned about DCs being taken away or being limited. Development charges help us do growth studies, so I do want to make sure there's some more consideration on that, because that is a very vital tool. As a former municipal administrator—that is something that you do need to help make projects happen. So I want to make sure that happens—that there's some reconsideration of some of those provisions as well.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Chair, how much time do we have?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I will turn it over to MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks, John, for being here. I really appreciate, especially, you speaking about the need to streamline times to get more houses built. I don't think these issues exist in a bubble. The environment is obviously critically important, and we all have to do something to fight climate change. We also have a housing crisis, and we need to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years.

We've been hearing a lot about the need for uniformity across conservation authorities, about what they should do. In your view and the TRCA's view, what is the right role of a conservation authority, if we were to look at mandating that province-wide?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you very much for the question.

I really think we arrived in a good spot related to the work of the conservation authorities working group under Minister Piccini. The Premier's special adviser on flooding said that we need to have a more enhanced role—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Thank you. We'll go to the official opposition. MPP Burch.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thanks for your presentation. I appreciate it.

What kind of consultation did the government go through, in your opinion? Did they consult with you before presenting this bill?

Mr. John MacKenzie: We have been working under the conservation authorities working group—that was really looking at how to implement measures under the previous changes that were made to the act. This bill came forward, and there were some surprises—I'll put it that way. There were some surprises, in particular, related to the limitation that I mentioned earlier about us not being able to work with our municipal partners.

Previously, the direction that we were working under was that we would have memorandums of understanding in place—and TRCA is ahead of that; we already have memorandums of understanding in place. We were updating some of them and actually building a couple of new ones for some of the smaller municipalities that are now facing growth in our jurisdiction. We got them approved by their councils in short order—and great working relationships. So we were on that path, and then this came forward, and it was a bit of a surprise because it was a change in direction.

Mr. Jeff Burch: So the government didn't consult with you on those changes that were a surprise.

You point out in your report that their own Housing Affordability Task Force did not recommend any of these changes to conservation authorities. And you even point out that the Premier's special adviser on flooding actually recommended a strengthening of conservation authority roles. Is that correct?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: Yes, that's correct.

Going back to my rationale: We've saved billions for the taxpayers by—I'll give you an example. For the waterfront and all the projects happening in the Toronto area, we're now suggesting an additional freeboard or an

additional protection in terms of an extra 25 centimetres, so that way, if you build infrastructure when there are high lake levels—there's all this advice we give; this is just an example. So we've been doing that, and the flood adviser said this is an important thing, to offset the costs that taxpayers are facing all across Canada. We are often asked by the federal government to be part of that discussion, because in other provinces, they're getting hit badly and the federal government is having to cough up—there's a great deal of funding required to help those provinces address the impacts. In Ontario, that's not the case—or it's less in Ontario because of the role of conservation authorities, working with municipal partners and the province.

1330

Mr. Jeff Burch: Do you have any idea why the Premier would have a special adviser on flooding if they're not going to follow their special advice? What's the point of having an adviser if they're not going to follow that professional advice?

Mr. John MacKenzie: I met with Mr. McNeil, and he was very thoughtful. So that's a question for the Premier.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm glad you mentioned the savings, because we often hear these economic arguments—and I think that when you delve down into this, the economic arguments are really against the government's bill. You pointed out that the conservation authority role has saved taxpayers billions compared to losses from extreme weather events. If they've saved taxpayers billions, won't diminishing that role cost taxpayers billions of dollars?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: I think that was one of my concerns about that one particular clause, as to limiting our ability to work with our providers.

We actually do work with the province quite well right now. We do work with infrastructure utilities quite well to make sure that, when they're building parts of a pipeline, they're doing it in a way that recognizes, "There's a meandering stream here, and it's going to potentially get worse and it could impact—and you need to build it the right way with the right standards." So that's some of the work we do, but there are other parts of it.

When Metrolinx is impacting a woodlot or impacting a forest, we've worked to try to—even though they're a creature of the province and we don't determine outcomes with Metrolinx, because they're a higher authority. But we do have ecological compensation. So if the environmental assessment says it has to hit that forest or woodlot, we make sure that there's a compensation program to help offset that loss.

So we do work to try to make sure infrastructure is done in a way that mitigates impacts but also is future-proofed to recognize the need to defensively protect our infrastructure.

Mr. Jeff Burch: With respect to a conservation authority's ability to comment on planning applications, from a business point of view, I thought it was interesting that you suggest that removing that capacity—you say at a time when we need to achieve certainty for development—we always hear from business about how they need certainty, and removing that certainty actually doesn't make sense

from a business point of view. Can you expand on that a little bit?

Mr. John MacKenzie: I'd love to. Thank you very much for the question.

There are many urban growth centres and mobility hubs in the greater Toronto Area, and even in the lower Don, in the eastern Broadview area, where Cadillac Fairview wants to build homes, a mixed-use community. There's the new Ontario Line station being put in to help serve that hub, but it's all dependent upon catalyst infrastructure, a flood protection landform that the TRCA has been advancing with the city of Toronto, as an example.

In Vaughan, as I mentioned in my submission, there's the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Black Creek Renewal project that will be a catalyst for major redevelopment in the southeast quadrant but will also benefit other projects within the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, exactly where you want to have density, height, mixed-use communities.

Similarly, I mentioned Brampton—right up the street, a kilometre and a half up the road, Brampton Riverwalk in downtown Brampton, an updated flood protection landform. There are many other examples.

When Metrolinx builds new infrastructure along the Concord part of the city of Vaughan, if they put it in the right way with the right infrastructure that's right-sized to allow for conveyance, it will get rid of the flood risk and will allow the achievement of housing that's contemplated through the minister's zoning orders and contemplated through all of this. That's why I view it as an opportunity. If we're working well with everybody, we can actually get through these processes and create certainty so that, when the right infrastructure investment comes in, you can get the housing if you have an agreement with the builders to build it upon receipt of the right-sized infrastructure.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): The next round is for the independent member. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's my second short round. I only get four and a half minutes.

I like how you said that you believe we can realize housing while protecting the environment. We've heard that over and over again in the last couple of days. We heard that from the amazing Future Majority youth, who said that affordability, sustainability and building housing are not enemies. I like that approach, and we're hearing it from everyone.

What are you hearing from municipalities in the GTA about this legislation?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: Our municipal partners are concerned about some aspects of it right now. I know development charges and the limitation on that is a challenge. I know that they are concerned about how they are going to re-order things and how different roles will change and how that actually will translate into practice. That's something I'm hearing about quite a bit from our partners that we work with every day. There's a lot of concern about costs that may result, related to the development charges and the schedules being changed. There is a great deal of concern about the potential for the minister to be able to freeze development fees. That's

something I've heard about as well. There is concern about our role being limited or removed from certain processes, because they do rely on us for the science that we bring to the table to protect the environment, but also to give them advice on climate change issues. We are in a climate change emergency. That has been declared by most governments, and that's something that they look to us for our scientific advice on. So I'm hearing a lot of concerns about that from our municipal partners, but I'm also hearing that they're going to try to continue, somehow, some way, working with us because they value that advice. I'm also hearing that from our partners at this time.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you have one piece of advice to us as we consider Bill 23?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Make sure the medicine matches with the diagnosis and we're not—my concern is that the intent is all good of trying to streamline and get housing built quicker, but we have to make sure that we're not actually going to disrupt a process that's working fairly well to create certainty. Yes, it can work better; absolutely. I believe in continuous improvement, but I don't want to create disruption at a time when we need some more stability and work to streamline—there has been quite a bit of new changes in legislation. There has been quite a bit of work to react to that.

I think what's needed—and I say it in my submission to you—is a focus on implementation, a focus on all partners working around the table, bringing in resources like the provincial facilitator, bringing in some new resources to help where there are land tribunal issues and there isn't a lot of capacity in that area and there are disagreements between landowners who want capacity or whatever.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Mr. John MacKenzie: That needs to be something that has to be looked at. The changes aren't by regulating or eliminating certain roles; it's in—the changes that I think are needed are by improving how we work together. I feel very strongly about that, and I think there are opportunities to do that, with a focus on the areas that we've already approved or have designated for housing. I think we need to continue on—but make those places come to life by agreements with industry, agreements with our infrastructure providers, provincial agencies, municipalities etc. So I think there's a lot of opportunity there to achieve housing.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): The last round will be for the government. MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: First of all, welcome, John. Thank you for being here. We really appreciate you being here today and advocating on behalf of the TRCA, and we appreciate the great work that the TRCA does and that you do as well. Thank you for everything that you do.

As we know, we're in a Canadian housing supply crisis. When we take a look at the G7 countries around the world—Scotiabank did a study on this, and according to them, we have the lowest number of housing units per thousand residents across the G7 nations. It currently takes up to 11 years, from start to finish, to build homes. Our

core goal with Bill 23 is to streamline the building process. In regard to that, while keeping in mind the core mandate of the conservation authorities, what kind of actions can the conservation authorities take to speed up and streamline the approvals process so we can get homes built faster?

1340

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: Thank you very much for the question; it's a great one.

One of the things that we are doing and I know our partners in other nearby conservation authorities are doing is—we have that working table I mentioned already with industry. We had our most recent meeting last week with the industry representatives for our jurisdiction. We work to focus in on priority areas. So if there are, for example, certain areas where we need to update guidelines or try to get interpretations from the province on guidelines, we can work in a concerted way to try to get those answers to make things happen.

We also try to bring forward new technology to make the process more efficient. With the development industry, we have been working on a planning application review and enforcement system. It's a new system to digitally ensure that we pass around applications and get them processed more quickly, involving our municipal partners. It's a whole IT enterprise system where we work with industry and they can track exactly who's reviewing what part of the application so we can work together on that. So that's a great example. We did ask and I have asked the province for some support on that from the streamline funding that was part of the Municipal Affairs and Housing announcement on that. It's a great opportunity.

We deal with thousands of permits a year at TRCA, working with industry. We've had three appeals in 12 years. One of them was the Amazon giant project that you heard about with the MZO, the other was something 10 years ago, and then one of them we've resolved with a condition. We get through thousands, and when I say thousands—20,000-plus permits in the last 10 years. We get through a lot of stuff, but we can do it even better if we work together with industry. So I think that's helpful.

Another thing that I would recommend strongly is up-fronting somehow some of this catalyst infrastructure that I was speaking about. You know about the Riverwalk project, I know, but there are other ones that—I think if we could work together, that would help make things happen.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Chair, how are we doing on time?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Four minutes.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Okay.

Mr. John MacKenzie: I think that would help a lot, if we could together come up with the right funding intake that helps put some of this infrastructure out there that will then help build housing—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Just for the sake of time, because we're very short and my colleague would like to speak after as well, I wanted to quickly ask: Based on the core mandate which has been given to the conservation authorities—when it comes to fulfilling that mandate, does

the bill still support that? I know there have been a lot of changes across the board because we're in unprecedented times and we want things to move faster. But given the core mandate of the conservation authority, if there are issues with flood risk, is the conservation authority still able to deal with those issues?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Almost. If you take my advice—and I ask that you take my advice, please—there do need to be some amendments. We need to amend the two that I first mentioned, in particular, that I'm quite concerned about. I think it's really important that conservation of land remains, so that way we can implement the provincial interests in protecting wetlands, which play a major role in flood protections. That's really important. The other one that I mentioned—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you, John. I'm going to split my time now and pass it over.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I'll continue on, actually, with that conversation, because I'm interested in the core mandate, which is to protect people and property from the impacts of natural hazards.

You touched upon something, as well, that I want you to talk about because it was specific to my own neighbourhood, Vaughan, which is bringing forward—you talked about that. Supporting housing—you talked about bringing these properties of value forward and working in a complementary fashion with the government so that you could streamline things. Could you elaborate?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Absolutely. I believe there's an implementation gap, where governments have good policy directives but sometimes something is lost in translation. We need to be around the table—all levels of government and the developers or the people who are trying to build these housing opportunities out.

For example, in Concord, which I know you understand because it's nearby, there's a potential—it has been designated; I recommended it as commissioner of planning—for a GO station to someday stop there, which would connect with Highway 7. MZOs have been issued for housing projects. Unfortunately, there is a flood risk in that area. If we work with Metrolinx, work with the province, work with all the relevant transit authorities, we could figure out a way to upsize infrastructure, remove the flood risk, retrofit that community and make it a more sustainable, green and accommodating place for new growth and housing. But we have to be at the table. We have to knock it out together. We have to make sure that the development charges from the region and the funding from Metrolinx are focused.

Ms. Laura Smith: But just to circle back: In that specific instance, we are talking about the core mandate, which is to protect people and property from the impacts of natural hazards—like those areas that can flood—which is absolutely key and the necessary ingredient to why you're a partner.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Ms. Laura Smith: I do hear from constituents—you understand Vaughan—quite frequently, and I get quite a

few conversations from my constituents as to why they can't develop their property because of these limitations. We do hear from many individuals who are held up, sometimes for a very prolonged period of time, and they're unable to provide the necessary infrastructure. Can you speak to that?

Mr. John MacKenzie: It would be subject to the specifics of it. But I do believe that we are, as conservation authorities, put in a situation of protecting the provincial interests. A lot of our regulations and a lot of the provincial regulations and the provincial policy statement, the Planning Act—we are in the middle of it. We are the implementing body. There isn't anybody else out there that's protecting it.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Thank you. That concludes our business for today.

MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I think we've all noticed that there has been an unprecedented number of people who have signed up to speak at the Toronto two-day hearings. We have over a hundred presentations, including provincial agencies, municipalities, housing stakeholders, mayors, AMO. I'm very concerned, given the limited number of spaces that we have in Toronto—I believe it's 36—that there are many stakeholders and individuals who should be speaking to this very important bill who will not be able to.

I would like to move a motion asking that we extend the hearings by two days on Bill 23 in order to ensure that all the stakeholders that are impacted by this bill get to speak and we come up with a bill that's as good as it can be. It would be a unanimous consent motion.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): A motion is tabled. We'll take a 10-minute recess so that we can review the motion.

The committee recessed from 1348 to 1404.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Welcome back, everyone. There's a motion tabled by MPP Bell.

Please move the motion.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I move that the committee meet on Friday, November 18, 2022, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. for public hearings on Bill 23.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I think this is an excellent motion. I'm sure my Conservative friends are not afraid to work an extra day so that we can hear from people. There's an awful lot of people we haven't heard from who want to make their voices heard on this bill.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I think this is fabulous. I am so glad my colleague moved it.

We are a victim of our own success. We're very popular because people are passionate about Ontario and housing—the housing crisis, the environmental crisis. So why not give them an opportunity to speak? I'm hearing that we're well oversubscribed downtown next week. Why wouldn't we want to hear from other Ontarians who could give us sage advice? There would definitely be supporters of the bill who would be coming down. So why wouldn't

we want to hear from those people as well as people who—by and large, we’ve heard support for building housing, but people want us to do it right. Anyone who has advice for us—I think we should definitely do the right thing, be respectful of all Ontarians’ voices. It’s just another day, and that’s our duty—to listen to Ontarians.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate? MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The reason I am introducing this motion is because we’ve had an unprecedented number of people sign up to speak to us for next week in Toronto, and because the hearings in Toronto are virtual, it means that—it doesn’t just cover Toronto; it covers the entirety of Ontario, because people in Ottawa have signed up to speak, and we know the housing crisis affects them as well.

When I look at the list of stakeholders who have signed up to speak, they are people who would be impacted by this sweeping bill; they are people who are experts on the subject matter that this bill impacts. We have AMO. We have provincial stakeholders. We have financial experts. We have a CMHC rep who is looking at speaking. We have a mayor who has signed up to speak as well. We have a responsibility, as MPPs, to make sure that the bills that we introduce and pass are as good as they can be, and that can only happen if we have expert public consultation and we take the time to listen to them and make amendments so that this bill can be improved. It’s just one extra day, and it will allow some additional experts to speak.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate? Further debate? Are members—sorry?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I’d like a recorded vote.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Okay, it’s a recorded vote. Everybody in favour—MPP Thanigasalam?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I just want to give my two comments on this motion proposed by MPP Bell.

We are having adequate time to listen to stakeholders across the region, especially—I want to note that we’re just concluding our second day of these public hearings, and yesterday we had public hearings, on November 9, in the morning from 10 a.m. to 12, and also from 1 p.m. to—we heard stakeholders all the way to how many stakeholders who want to show up. Today is the second day we are going to have—and today is November 10—from morning to the entire day be allocated for public hearings.

However, when we go to next week, Chair, we’re going to have both in-person—like today and yesterday—as well as virtual, so we’re going to have a hybrid model to listen

to stakeholders, not just from Toronto, but across the region.

Today we are in Brampton, listening to stakeholders, and we heard from community members who want to contribute to the public hearings. Yesterday, as I said, we sat down in Markham the whole day and we heard from them.

As we move on to next week—November 16, from morning to evening, we’re going to have public hearings, and on November 17, Thursday, we’re going to have public hearings again. As I said, the public hearings happening at Queen’s Park are going to be virtual as well as in person.

Chair, the reason I’m highlighting these dates is because we feel like we want to hear—and the consultations will definitely help all members and our government to make sure that we heard not just from particular areas of the region, but across the region. That’s why we want to keep it virtual, as well.

So I do welcome the fact that there is a comprehensive list of stakeholders who would like to speak, and I’m looking forward to these presenters in the next week.

However, since we have these adequate times allocated, which are November 9, November 10, November 16, as well as November 17—November 16 and November 17, as I said, moving forward, is going to be a hybrid model. So I feel like this is comprehensive time, adequate time for the public hearings. Therefore, we will not vote in favour of this motion.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate? Further debate? Are the members ready to vote?

Ayes

Bell, Burch, McMahan.

Nays

Grewal, Holland, McGregor, Sabawy, Laura Smith, Thanigasalam.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): I declare the motion lost.

That concludes our business for today.

As a reminder, the deadline for the filing of written submissions on Bill 23 is 7 p.m. on November 17, 2022.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, November 16, 2022.

The committee adjourned at 1412.

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