

Legislative
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Assemblée
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de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

HE-39

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

Greenbelt Statute Law
Amendment Act, 2023

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 30 November 2023

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-39

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

Loi de 2023 modifiant des lois
en ce qui concerne la ceinture
de verdure

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi 30 novembre 2023

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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CONTENTS

Thursday 30 November 2023

Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, Bill 136, Mr. Calandra / Loi de 2023 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne la ceinture de verdure, projet de loi 136, M. Calandra.....	HE-825
Statement by the minister and responses..... Hon. Paul Calandra	HE-825

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 30 November 2023

Jeudi 30 novembre 2023

The committee met at 1300 in committee room 1.

**GREENBELT STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2023**

**LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 and certain other Acts, to enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023, to repeal an Act and to revoke various regulations / *Projet de loi 136, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure et d'autres lois, édictant la Loi de 2023 sur la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge et abrogeant une loi et divers règlements.*

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to conduct public hearings on Bill 136, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 and certain other Acts, to enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023, to repeal an Act and to revoke various regulations. 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?

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER
AND RESPONSES**

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Appearing today is the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Paul Calandra. He will have 20 minutes to Appear today is the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Paul Calandra. He will have 20 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 40 minutes for questions and answers, divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members, and two rounds of five minutes for the independent member. Are there any questions? Seeing

none, I'll ask the minister—welcome. You have 20 minutes for your presentation. You may begin.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Colleagues, I'm pleased to be here to provide the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy with important details about our government's proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023. The proposed Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act would amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005, the Oak Ridges Conservation Act and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs Act, and would enact the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2023.

This piece of proposed legislation shows our government is following through on our commitment to restore lands to the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine. Even more than that, this bill would enhance the protection of those lands and expand the greenbelt area.

Along with Bill 150, the proposed Planning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023, which I introduced earlier this month, these proposals show that our government is dedicated to achieving our goal of building at least 1.5 million new homes by 2031 in a way that maintains and reinforces public trust and, of course, is sensitive to the concerns of communities across Ontario.

If passed, Bill 136 would ensure any future boundary changes to the greenbelt area must be made through a public and transparent process. As you know, Madam Chair, Bill 136 would codify these boundaries into legislation, meaning that in order to make boundary changes, any future government would need to bring legislation to the House, which of course ensures a more rigorous and higher level of scrutiny and debate. We are proposing these additional protections because Ontarians have made it clear they want an enhanced level of protection across these lands.

One of the purposes of this bill is to return 7,400 acres, or 3,000 hectares, of farmland and natural areas back into the protected region of the greenbelt. The land consists of 15 areas removed or redesignated from the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine in late 2022. The parcels of land are in 10 municipalities. These communities are Ajax, Clarington, Grimsby, Hamilton, King township, Markham, Pickering, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Our proposed legislation would keep in the 9,400 acres, or 3,800 hectares, that our government added to the green-

belt in 2022. These lands include 13 urban river valleys, which are referred to as URVs, and these are in:

- Stoney Creek;
- Wilmot Creek;
- Soper Creek in Bowmanville;
- Harmony Creek, which includes the addition of Darlington Provincial Park, which is partially located in both Oshawa and Clarington;
- an expanded URV for the Oshawa Creek;
- an expanded URV for Fourteen Mile Creek in Oakville;
- an additional URV created for the Don River in Toronto by adding Burke Brook, Wilket Creek and Taylor-Massey Creek; and
- an expansion of the Humber River URV by adding Humber Creek and Black Creek.

We also want to restore protections brought to some areas through the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2005. Specifically, we propose reinstating the easements and covenants provided for the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. The Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve easements are grants from a landowner to a conservation body, and covenants are legal agreements between them. Both the easements and covenants restrict development by limiting the use of land to agricultural uses. The restoration will recognize the importance of the agricultural lands in this area and would ensure their sustainable use for present and future generations.

An important aspect of this bill that I want to speak to you about is the immunity provisions. The legislation would include measures to strengthen the province's immunity from landowners attempting to seek damages based on actions related to the greenbelt. The intent of these measures is to ensure there is no impact on taxpayers for restoring these parcels of land to the greenbelt.

These changes would ensure that the immunity provisions are aligned with more recent provisions in other legislation, and it would provide express immunity from personal liability for the Office of the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator. As well, the proposed provisions would expressly limit all liability with respect to the ministerial lands, including any liability associated with prior claims or the 2022 settlement of litigation. Overall, this aspect of the proposed legislation seeks to address not only the crown's ultimate risk of liability but also reduce the practical risks and costs of litigation claims.

Chair, if I may, I'd like to also talk briefly about the provisions of the Greenbelt Act that mandate a review every 10 years. We are looking at making some changes to how this review may take place in the future. We want to remove any politics from the review and put it back into the hands of conservation, agriculture and environmental non-partisan experts and through the engagement with municipalities and Indigenous communities. Once final, the experts' recommendations will be provided to the Auditor General and the Commissioner of the Environment to ensure the review process was both fair and guided by recommendations to improve the process. We will be

sharing more details on the review with the public very soon.

As you may know, the greenbelt covers almost two million acres in total, or 800,000 hectares, across the greater Golden Horseshoe. This protected land area has many different uses, contains agricultural working lands, old-growth forests, wetlands and, of course, moraine lands. It is used for farming, conservation, recreation and tourism. And let's not forget that, not only is it within Canada's most densely populated region, it was also within one of North America's fastest-growing regions.

We're looking at an area with a population forecasted to exceed 15 million people by 2051, which, I don't have to tell any of you, is a staggering number. That means we're going to have to look at how we can build a lot of homes as quickly as possible and live up to our commitment of 1.5 million homes by 2031. We have seen over and over and over again how important that goal is. So we welcome thousands of people every year to the province who are coming to help build a bigger, better and stronger Ontario.

At the same time, we have generations of people in Ontario who have benefited from a province that offered their parents endless opportunity but who now find themselves wondering whether the dream of home ownership will ever be a reality for themselves. These are people who are saving money and working hard—they're doing everything that is being asked of them—but the reality is that, as result of decades of inaction from previous governments, we have not been building houses at a pace that allows people to achieve their dream.

Our government is going to and is changing that. We're doubling down on our efforts to ensure more houses are being built, but we obviously can't do it alone. We must do it in partnership with our municipal friends. This proposed legislation, along with Bill 150, gets us back on track with municipalities. It shows that we are listening.

Since the beginning of our mandate, we have put forward numerous measures to increase the supply of housing. We've done this by encouraging increased density through Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, and we've worked with municipalities to remove red tape and eliminate duplication in the planning process.

What's more, we've announced the expansion of strong-mayor powers to heads of council who have committed to the housing targets provided by the province, and we've proposed revising the definition of "affordable rental units" through Bill 134, the Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, to reduce the cost of building much-needed affordable units.

To further incentivize municipalities to build more housing, we've introduced municipal housing targets, coupled with the new Building Faster Fund because we know we need to prepare for the coming population growth—growth that is, in fact, frankly, already here.

1310

In just the next 10 years alone, Ontario is expected to grow by more than two million people, and we expect about 70% of that growth to take place in the greater

Golden Horseshoe, which is already one of the fastest-growing regions in North America. We've done a lot of work with municipalities to build more homes, but we must make it easier to build the housing needed to accommodate the anticipated population growth. That's why in our third housing supply action plan, *More Homes Built Faster*, we introduced measures to encourage the creation of up to three units on most urban residential lots. For example, that could be a main residence, a basement apartment and a laneway house. This means enabling these additional housing options on residential lots where neighbourhoods already exist, and without lengthy planning approvals and development charges. This increased density will accommodate extended family members and increase the mix of rental housing options. Not only that, but it would also help homeowners pay their mortgage. And as you know, Madam Chair, interest rates have increased very rapidly in a very short period of time.

I also want to point out that these additional housing options will be located where housing and infrastructure already exist. This will make it easier for people to live closer to their families and workplaces. However, it will take both short-term strategies and long-term commitment from all levels of government to drive this change. We must keep that in mind as we make it easier to build housing.

We must continue to ensure municipalities are planning for sufficient land supply over the long term to accommodate even more growth. One way we are doing this is through our *More Homes Built Faster* housing supply action plan, which is working to streamline responsibilities for municipal planning and remove duplication in the planning process. That will help cities, towns and rural communities grow, with a mix of ownership and rental housing types that meets the needs of all Ontarians. That means a range of housing types, from single-family homes, townhomes, mid-rise apartments—and that's just from one of our housing supply action plans. Since 2019, we have released four action plans, all of which take significant action to unlock even more housing.

Our government's previous housing supply action plans, along with significant measures we've taken thus far, are having a positive impact on housing supply. We've made very significant progress. Both 2021 and 2022 saw the most housing starts in over 30 years, with close to 100,000 housing starts recorded each year. In 2022, Ontario recorded close to 15,000 purpose-built rentals, which is the highest number on record.

We need to take even more steps, however. We have to encourage our municipal partners to aim higher, and we need to ensure that we meet our goal of 1.5 million homes by 2031. It's going to obviously take all stakeholders, including the federal government and municipal partners along with the not-for-profit private sector, including financial institutions, if we're going to get the job done.

I want to talk about a recent incentive we have introduced to encourage municipalities to build faster. The new *Building Faster Fund* is a \$1.2-billion fund that will provide up to \$400 million per year to municipalities that

meet or exceed their annual housing targets. It will provide financial support for municipalities that they can direct toward housing-enabled infrastructure and other related costs that support community growth.

Obviously, investing in housing, enabling infrastructure is the key to unlocking even more of Ontario's housing needs.

With that, Madam Chair, I will conclude my remarks and turn it over to the committee for any questions they may have.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The round of questioning will start with the official opposition. I'll go to MPP Shaw to begin.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the minister. In a response to my question in the House, where I asked why you were only giving yourself the opportunity to depute before the committee, using up the entire hour, which was a disappointment to some of the people in the room, you did say that you were a very entertaining guy. I'm wondering if the people here—you might as well ask them if they feel the same when we're done here.

We do have here people that have come from Friends of the Golden Horseshoe that represents people like David Crombie, Lynn Morrow, Susan Lloyd Swail, Kevin Eby, Ken Greenberg, David Israelson and Victor Doyle. We also have people from Stop Sprawl Durham and the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition. We have the Greenbelt Promise and Wellington Water Watchers. So there's a number of people here today because, as you have said, Ontarians rightly made clear that they want the two million acres of the greenbelt to be protected. So that's why we're here. But as you know, and while I do appreciate you discussing the plans for building the housing that we need in the province, I think that maybe we've skipped a step by talking about how we got here and how the greenbelt lands were disrespected, if you will, and the people of the province of Ontario were disrespected by some of the unilateral decisions that you made.

I just want to start by asking you—these lands are being restored because they are environmentally significant. I'm going to ask you in a minute, despite what you've said, do you now believe that those lands continue to be environmentally significant and if you can talk about what ways you think that they are environmentally significant. Because I know, once you have the floor, it's hard to get it back. We have seen you; you do very well answering questions, and I know I'll be challenged to wrestle the floor back from you. But I'll do my best, because we only have a few minutes here.

What I want to do is to ask you also: We got here because of an Auditor General's report, the Integrity Commissioner report, that show that preferential treatment was given to developers, that the issuing of MZOs—which you've said you're going to review—a significant amount of them were not done properly. You are now facing an RCMP investigation. So I think skipping the part of how we got here was important for me to fill in.

So my two questions: One is, given how you are repealing this and rolling this back, do you now believe that

the greenbelt lands are environmentally significant and important for Ontarians, and, as you promised, will you continue to protect them in perpetuity? The second question is, given that the RCMP investigation is unfolding, do you think that there's going to be anything revealed in that RCMP investigation that we should have known before this bill was prepared and that may be something that's significant to the changes that you are making in this bill?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll do your second one first: I don't know. The RCMP will conduct their investigation in the fashion that they feel and will report when they have an opportunity to do so.

With respect to the importance of the greenbelt lands, I know how important the lands are. I was here as a political staffer back in 2002 when the then-Conservative government contemplated the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine and brought forward the Oak Ridges moraine land planning act. I played a role in helping develop that piece of legislation back then, and also the legislation that led to the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. In fact, my family, back in 2004, was probably one of the first families to put a conservation easement across our farmlands in Stouffville—across 60 acres of farmland in Stouffville, an area that is now surrounded by housing. A conservation easement in favour of the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust was put over those lands and preserved.

So I think I understand how important those lands are and the greenbelt lands remain. That is why, of course, when we initially contemplated some of these changes, we also added lands to the greenbelt. Not only does the original legislation contemplate a one-for-one, we went above and beyond the one-for-one.

I also take a look at some of the things, and I think I've been pretty clear about this in the House. We made a public policy decision that wasn't supported by people, but on lands that were—some of the rationale—on lands that have the ability, or had the ability, to be serviced. It was a decision presumably made to allow housing to be built on those lands.

I also take a look at it in a different fashion as well. I look at where people are coming, and I don't look at just infrastructure on the basis of what is under the ground; I look at it on the basis of what is allowed in a community and what a community needs. So on those bases, when I look at the fact that the population was growing as quickly as it is—and I welcome that. I wouldn't be here if we weren't a country that welcomed people. Those were the factors that we looked at. But it was very clear that the people did not support that public policy decision, so that is why we're here today. We're reversing that.

But also—and I'll give the floor back to you—as I've said over and over and over again, we're going to meet those targets. Come hell or high water, we're building 1.5 million within the existing urban boundaries, and municipalities are just going to have to step up to the plate and help us do it.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, high water might be the thing if we don't get an actual, serious climate action plan in this province. You served that one up.

Our critic MPP Jessica Bell will be asking about the housing plan, but I want to go back—and I'm glad you brought up the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. Undoing what you've done here is right, and that's why we're here and we support that, but there are some people who feel that while the bill is doing what's right, it doesn't go far enough.

1320

In the submission from Friends of the Golden Horseshoe, they're really concerned that you still have a provision in this bill to remove lands. You've retained that provision.

I have a media release here, as I said, from the folks of the Stop the Sprawl group. They're really quite concerned that—the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve had four layers of protection, right? It had four layers of protection, and in many ways, what is strange, if you ask me, is that we are here with a bill before us—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Fifty seconds.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —that is repairing the fact that you removed all of those statutory protections with this bill, so you will understand that people are concerned and rightfully suspicious that you would have another bill that would remove those.

And so, my question very specifically when it comes to the DRAP: You've only restored two of those easements—two are not being restored—and you talked about, it sounded like, swaps. So I think people are very concerned that you still have the ability to swap land in and out. Can you assure people that you won't be doing that? In fact, section 12(2) of the act, we should repeal that, so you can confidently let people know—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Ten seconds.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —that you will not be messing around in the DRAP again.

I apologize that I didn't give you time to answer, but I've timed it wrong.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think so.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There you go. Thank you. There is another round coming.

MPP McMahon, you can go ahead with five minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, and I won't be doing that because I have five minutes. We're just going to be speed questioning and answering.

We're in a housing crisis; we get that. We want shovels in the ground as quickly as you do. Why three units? Why not four units?

Hon. Paul Calandra: We consulted with our municipal partners on four units. I think we made that pretty clear with the housing supply action plan. We're here today, in part, because many people have said that we haven't consulted enough, so we're going to do that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: How long will that take?

Hon. Paul Calandra: We had a housing forum just this week. We're combining all of that information from our partners and we're moving as quickly as we possibly can.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Because Toronto has already done it.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So why not just roll that out?

Hon. Paul Calandra: You raise a good point. There are a number of municipalities that have already done it, so there is nothing stopping our municipal partners from moving ahead and doing this right now. I think—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: But we could lead.

Hon. Paul Calandra:—you've answered the question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes. I just think it's up to the province to lead.

Hon. Paul Calandra: But we're here today because you're suggesting that we led too hard and too fast.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, not in the right area, but—

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. So we're in a housing crisis. We both agree on that.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So areas to build—let's just see if we're still in agreement. Backyards and laneways: that's good with you for building housing?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, great. Main streets, avenues?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Looking at upzoning as of right?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, right. Transit hubs, yes?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Clearly.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yellowbelt—getting into the yellowbelt a little bit.

So why would you come up with this preposterous idea to build on the greenbelt?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think you just answered it there. We're expecting to have millions of people come to the province, and you're looking at areas where there's not only infrastructure under the ground—I know in the city of Toronto you look at what's under the ground and what services are available.

Take a look at us in Stouffville. You want to build homes where there is a community centre. You want to build it where there's a brand new high school. You want to build it near jobs. We don't have a TTC bus coming down our main street in Stouffville. We have two buses in the morning that my daughters get on to get to school, two buses in the afternoon that they get on to get back home, and that's it. Otherwise, it's taxi-dad and taxi-mom all over the place. The same is for new people who come here.

While I appreciate how Toronto councillors, and former councillors or Toronto members or members who are urban, have a different sense of how things are because of your reality and the investments that you've made, in other parts you need both infrastructure for, as I said, jobs, education, transportation, but you also need services that

newcomers can relate to. My parents moved to the Danforth because there were a lot of Italian-speaking people in the 1950s and 1960s. You can't put people in areas where they—infrastructure is not just what's under, it's what's on top.

That is why the decision was made at that time. But, obviously, it was a public policy decision that people did not support, and that's why you move it back, and you go ahead and go for it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: You're forgetting I'm a small-town girl from Collingwood.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know, I know.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So I've got both experiences.

Hon. Paul Calandra: You get it more than anybody else in this place.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Any regrets?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Any regrets? In what sense?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That we're here, that we're reversing this. We didn't have to do it in the first place.

Hon. Paul Calandra: That's what we do. This is what a Legislature does. We brought forward a public policy decision. We were focused on building 1.5 million homes. The people have decided against that decision and we are bringing it back. So I don't have any regrets at all, no.

In fact, it's just the opposite, I would say—just the opposite. The bill before you will bring forward a level of protection on the greenbelt that has actually never existed ever before. Do I regret that? No.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, we could've done that, in my opinion, without the scene of a whole year wasted—

Hon. Paul Calandra: But we didn't, did we? Nobody did.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: You could have, because you're in power, instead of having people spend all their time at rallies and protests, and all their spare time fighting, crusading, walks and talks to crusade for these precious wetlands and forest and farmlands. We didn't have to be here, had we done it right in the first spot.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Forty seconds.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Many governments had a long period of time in order to bring the types of protections that we are bringing here and they never did it. You ask me, do I regret it? No. I don't regret the bill that we've brought forward. I think it provides exceptional protections to the greenbelt lands and I think legislators on both sides worked exactly as people would expect us to do.

That people protest is part of democracy. They should be protesting if they don't like something that we've done. You should be asking questions and we should be here making a public policy decision that is in the best interest of the people. I think we are doing that. So do I regret that democracy went the way it's supposed to? No, not for a second.

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

I'm going to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Sabawy, please start.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to the minister for bringing this point of view and this very informative speech for all of us about the motivation around trying to build 1.5 million homes, and all the aspects of that.

Our government is delivering on our promise to restore, grow and enhance protection for the greenbelt. At the same time, the need to build at least 1.5 million homes is greater than ever. Last year, our population reached a historic 15 million. Recent projections show that we are going to add an additional four million people who will call Ontario home by 2031, at minimum. Our government has a responsibility to ensure that our largest and fastest-growing communities are prepared for the growth and have the existing housing and infrastructure support for current residents as well.

Minister, can you expand on how our government plans to balance our critical need for more homes while simultaneously fostering the resolution, restoration, growth and protection of the greenbelt?

I have to put a note here that I really like, in your notes, the comparing of the needs of rural and urban areas. There are very, very far points of view between rural residents and urban residents. Urban residents look to the greenbelt as a lung for their city. They need more oxygen. They need green space. Rural residents need services. They need arteries. They need to have the services which help them to make their life easier.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, look, let me say this; I've said it and I'll say it over and over and over again: We are going to build the 1.5 million. It is what it is. That means that our partners are going to have to do it within the existing urban boundaries.

You come from a city that just yesterday, I think, turned down 632 units on a parking lot by a GO train station. The same thing is happening in Markham. You're talking about thousands of units that are proposed right next to a newer, refurbished GO train station that have not been approved and are no closer to being approved today than they were a few years ago.

We have communities, as MPP McMahon has talked about, that are not as excited about four units on a lot. We have some that resist three. Again, you come from a community that was prepared to turn around federal housing dollars because your council was opposed to a certain number of units on each lot.

1330

So there is a lot to do here, right? There is a lot to do. What have we done? We brought the protections back, and those protections on the greenbelt are in legislation. It has never happened before. That will be the case going forward if this bill is approved.

Ms. Shaw talked about the differences for the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve in this bill as opposed to what was there before. The changes only reflect the fact that this legislation makes the other two easements that you were talking about, the other two parts, redundant. They're not required. So you wouldn't put in two redundancies when the bill actually covers that in the first place.

But the big thing here is, you've got to build the homes. I've heard any number of reasons why we can't build houses. I've gone to a number of municipalities—everybody wants to build it, just not there. They want transit, but they don't want houses here. They want a long-term-care home in Port Hope, just not there. That has to stop. We've got thousands of people who need homes—thousands we are welcoming.

Sorry, you touched a nerve with me on this, because we have people sitting in shelters right now who we invited to this country. We invited them to come here. And you know what will happen? What we're seeing in the newspaper just the other day: People are starting to blame immigrants for the housing crisis. That's what's going to happen unless we meet our goals. And let me tell you something, and you will know as well, we need these people. We need immigrants to come to this province, because without them, we are in a heck of a lot of trouble.

That's why my parents came, because they could have a home. There were five of them in a dinky little home in downtown Toronto close to Danforth Avenue—because my dad got off a train and he went and was a barber on the Danforth. They would swap beds. One would work and the other one would come in when the other one was working. But you know what? They didn't mind, they didn't care, because they knew if they worked hard, they would have a home. Right now, people don't feel that they have that opportunity, so we are going to make sure that they do.

Are there headwinds? A hundred per cent. Interest rates increasing the way they have in the short-term that they have is a problem that we are going to try to have to overcome. Infrastructure in the ground is a huge problem that we are hearing from all of our municipal friends. They need more housing-enabling infrastructure—sewer and water. That's why we're going to bring forward a use-it-or-lose-it. That is why we're investing in infrastructure in the ground so we can go back to our municipal friends and say, "We've given you the infrastructure and now we expect the homes to be built."

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A minute and five seconds. MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair, and through you: Minister, thank you for being here.

You talked about the review that is going to be undertaken every 10 years. Can you please talk a little bit about the underlying principles?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, the principles will be based on the original principles of the moraine: preservation of agriculture, protection of water and cultural heritage on the sites. Those were the original principles with respect to even the consideration of the Oak Ridges moraine land planning act many, many years ago. It was about preservation of water, and that's where we were with the act initially brought in. We focused on those areas, and we will bring outside experts in to ensure that we're able to accomplish that.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Right. Thank you, sir, for that answer.

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

We'll now go to the official opposition. MPP Shaw, do you want to start off this round?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: As I was saying before we ended the first round, this proposed legislation allows for a process for removals from the greenbelt land, and you can understand why people are rightfully concerned. It used to be, really, that statutes warranted some kind of level of respect in the province, but you removed them all with that previous bill that you're rolling back.

But people are really concerned still. For example, the bill before us now, the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, has given the minister, MPP Surma, incredible powers to issue MZOs when it comes to Ontario Place, if it's not beyond that, and to bypass environmental assessments. So while you're righting a wrong here, there's still a healthy dose of suspicion. Is it the tiger that can't change its stripes, or the cheetah who can't change its spots? I mean, that's what people are feeling, right? They've got an eye on you.

So I want to make sure that we're asking you—sorry, I'm not trying to be disrespectful; I couldn't even get my thing right. But we're asking you, for example—you have an opportunity, by amending subsection 12(2), to make sure that it says that you will not remove greenbelt lands to reassure people that you stand by your word when you say that you're going to get the greenbelt the greatest protections in the history of Ontario. That's your opportunity to do that. So that's one question: Why would you not want to remove that section or amend that section?

And then the second thing is, MPP Coe asked about the greenbelt review, and my question is: You said what the purpose is, but really, will that greenbelt review be in line with what you're saying and with this bill, and that the greenbelt review will not in any way change the idea that we are going to protect greenbelt lands in perpetuity?

Hon. Paul Calandra: On the second part first: The review would, as I said, go to the Auditor General through to the environment commissioner, to make sure that the original principles are being respected. So we'll allow those two officers to ensure that that happens.

With respect to lands being removed from the greenbelt, no current government can bind a future government from doing things. That's just the reality. So why do I not put that in the legislation? Because it's unconstitutional and can't happen, and a future government can issue the "notwithstanding" clause and undo the legislation anyway, so it's completely impractical. It's a talking point. It's not something that's effective and I don't think we have—again, I don't want to accuse you of just giving a talking point. I understand why you've asked the question, but the reality is, it just can't happen. It's just not a protection that could be added over.

But that's why we've added that it has to come through a legislative piece in the House, which then has to incur debate, which has to then, of course, be on the registry and go through committee and all of the other processes that would go with any future government's desire to remove.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, minister.

I'm going to cede my time to MPP Bell, please.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Bell, four minutes and 10 seconds.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you so much for coming here. I also want to thank the many individuals who have taken to the time to come and listen in this committee. It would be preferable if you were able to speak and give testimony and share your expertise and your experience to this committee as well, but that is not to be.

What I can also say is this: There is a piece of legislation here that is geared to protecting the greenbelt, but I also know that the greenbelt is not going to be opened up not just because of this legislation, but because people across Ontario have made it politically untenable to do so, and that is because of you, so thank you so much for being here.

I'm the housing critic; my focus is on housing. We heard time and time again from this government that the reason why they're opening up the greenbelt is because we need houses, houses, houses, even though the government's own Housing Affordability Task Force was very clear, and they said that a shortage of land is not the cause of the housing crisis. Minister, do you agree with that statement?

Hon. Paul Calandra: "Is there land available for that"?

Ms. Jessica Bell: No, that the shortage of land is not the cause of the housing crisis.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Do I agree with that statement?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. Because one of the challenges we have is that municipalities across Ontario have said that they can meet their housing targets by building—

Hon. Paul Calandra: If they desire to meet it. That's the difference, right? It's if they desire to meet it. It's wonderful to say that there's enough land. Is there enough land? Yes. But in Mississauga, there is land, but no political will. In Markham, there is land, but no political will. In parts of Toronto, there is land and no political will.

You talk to me about people standing up to the greenbelt. Where were those people when, 17 times, the previous government went in to open it up? There's a housing crisis right now because municipalities will not live up to the expectations of building 1.5 million homes—not all of them; some are doing their job remarkably well. They understand how important it is to do it.

So is there enough land? If the municipal partners agree that they have to meet those targets, there's enough land. If they don't, then there's not.

1340

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. My second question is this: There are many reasons why municipalities are having difficulty meeting their housing targets. We have heard from AMO that they are now short \$9 billion over the next nine years because this government made a decision to cut developer fees. They're also telling us loudly and clearly that they are now short \$500 million that should be going to affordable housing and shelters that they now simply don't have. Because of this shortage, they are having difficulty providing the infrastructure they need

to service new homes. They have made a request very clearly again and again: They want this government to make municipalities whole so they can build and maintain the infrastructure that's needed for new homes. Can you commit to that?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, as I've said all along and as the Premier has said, we will ensure that municipalities have the resources that they need to get infrastructure in the ground. Most of my municipal partners—and I have met with AMO on two occasions, at least so far, as a group and individually with a number of different mayors. Many of them are saying they are concerned by the definition of “attainable” as much as they were concerned about the definition of “affordable housing.”

As you know, this House yesterday unanimously approved the definition of “affordable housing.” Not many municipalities have updated their financials to include our updated definition in what they consider their make-whole. We will be bringing forward a definition of “attainable housing” very, very soon with respect to development charges, which will also have, I think, a very positive impact.

No municipality has lost development charges because of the definition of “attainable housing.” They are budgeting a loss based on what they think the definition is. So when it comes to—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister, let's be clear: The loss in development fees is because—

Hon. Paul Calandra: No, there is not a loss—
Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We're out of time, gang, on this round. I apologize.

Hon. Paul Calandra: There's not a loss.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's not just about affordable housing. The development fee reductions are—

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay, thank you very much—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: This is not coming out of my time, is it?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes, and so, MPP McMahon, it's your round.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. I have precious time—and time is of the essence, right? Especially in a housing crisis. And it's been a year—a long year.

In the housing crisis, when we could have all been laser focused on giving 200% to build those homes, how do you feel about wasting the year?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I look and I see the highest level of housing starts, the highest level of purpose-built rental, and I think to myself—you may call that a waste. I think that is exceptional progress.

I think where time may have been wasted is when, a year ago, we asked the federal government to remove the HST from purpose-built rentals and it took them a year to get that done. We asked for it a year ago; it's gotten done now, and we are starting to see massive construction on there.

But even without that, the highest starts in rentals in over 15 years—it might even be 30 years. Actually, it's ever. Excuse me; it's ever. The highest starts in purpose-built rental ever, the highest starts in new home construction in over 30 years—so that's pretty good progress, I think. I'm pretty excited about that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: We spoke about four units—four units per property, up-zoning the avenues, as-of-right. You speak about Danforth a lot, which is my neighbourhood, and it's ridiculous: It's two storeys, three storeys, four storeys along a subway corridor, so building that up and looking at provincially owned lands. We had a Metrolinx site at 8 Dawes Road in my area that sold with no condition of affordable housing—that's another aspect—parking lots. So looking at all these—we talked about laneway suites and all kinds of ideas, co-ops. Can you be bolder and braver and more creative in building housing?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, so the bill that is before the House right now with respect to the new deal for the city of Toronto includes a commitment by the city of Toronto to provide access for affordable housing on surplus city of Toronto properties. You were there for a while at the city of Toronto, too, and I think you probably—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I pushed through as much—

Hon. Paul Calandra: You pushed, but you probably didn't get as much as you probably would have wanted, right?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, I did in my area.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Wonderful. But there is so much more that can be done. That's why we put it right into the city of Toronto new deal legislation: because we knew that there are surplus lands that should be made available. We're working with the city of Toronto. I think I said this in the previous one, on the official plan bill: They've been a really good partner over the last little bit. They recognize that they weren't as ambitious as they should have been along transit-oriented-community corridors, so we're taking the time working with them to ensure that we get the right amount of density. They have a goal of not only meeting but exceeding their target, and we're asking the same thing with all of those municipal partners who are getting massive investment in transit and transportation. They're not the same thing.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Right. I think they're waiting for you to sign off on that PMTSA—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Actually, they're working with us on that, so—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. All right, because we want to see that.

My last question, very quickly—my colleague started it. The Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve has four layers of protection, but only two are proposed to be returned. Can you speak—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Two would be redundant because the legislation provides the extra layers that weren't

there originally when it was contemplated. So two would become redundant.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. We're going to look into that. All right.

And then the last thing—I get an extra question because you were quick on that. Lucky you; that's your reward. You mentioned about removing politics from the process, which I think is great. I'm with you on that. You mentioned about bringing in stakeholders to have the conversation: conservation authorities—which, we want to reinstate their power, for sure; environmentalists; farmers; Indigenous communities; local municipalities; municipal leaders. Can you elaborate on that?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sixty seconds.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, we'll have a whole host of subject matter experts who can review based on the principles that are there. We will submit those people to the environmental commissioner, through the Auditor General, to ensure that the process is fair, to ensure that it meets the goals, as set up by the legislation back in 2005.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So you'll be all ears and willing to work together.

Hon. Paul Calandra: That's what the legislation is very clear on. It's the first time that this type of review, actually, will be codified. It's the first time that the protections will be codified in legislation. It's the first time that a government will submit this to the environmental commissioner. It was a Conservative government that brought in the Oak Ridges moraine land planning act. It was a Conservative government that created the Ministry of the Environment. It was a Conservative government—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Which is why I was so shocked that it wasn't respected.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —that brought in conservation authorities. So we will continue to do what we have to do in order to ensure that we have protections. But not just protections in people's backyards, but protections across the entirety of the greenbelt that reflect what communities throughout the entirety of the greenbelt—

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: It would be very easy for a government to legislate for one part of the city—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry. We're out of time in this round.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: You can always legislate to give me more.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I know we're all enthusiastic. And just a—

Hon. Paul Calandra: You can get me in the House; I'm on House duty today.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Just a friendly reminder, also, for our observers today here not to participate too fully.

Okay. We'll go to the government side for the final round, for seven and a half minutes. MPP Kusendova-Bashta, please.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I want to first state for the record that, actually, the Liberal government has

moved land out of the greenbelt 17 times. I think that's really important for the public to understand. This legislation is providing more protections for the greenbelt land through legislation and also regulation. In fact, we're adding more land into the greenbelt.

I do want to speak up for the younger generation because, very respectfully, I couldn't help but notice that we don't have many members of the younger generation present here in the audience today. When I was elected in 2018—

Interruption.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Please, please.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Yes, one person. I was elected in 2018 as one of the youngest females in Parliament, and today, at age 34, I am—

Interruption.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay, please.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I think it's important that we have young people—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay, just a second, MPP—I just want to remind everyone that's here with us today that we just have to keep the noise down so that the members can ask the questions and answers are received. So just like in the chamber, we have to be quiet in the galleries. Thank you.

Please continue.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: And since the opposition does not speak up for young people, somebody has to—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Shaw has a point of order.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That is clearly a—imputing motive is something that we don't allow in the House, and I believe the committee has the same rules. That's my point of order. And also, I mean, it's enough with—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Shaw, thank you very much. It's not a valid point of order. Thank you, everybody. I can use the gavel more if you all want.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, I'd like to see that—just not on me.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay—not a point of order.

MPP Kusendova-Bashta.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: So just to go back, I'd like to speak up for the younger people, my generation, who are currently being completely priced out of the housing market. I will give you my example. I came to this country as an immigrant, and my mom, who was a single mom, raised me. She was able to afford a home in Mississauga back in 2002, when the average price of homes was around \$241,000. Today, in 2023, that same home—the average price of a home in Mississauga is about \$1 million. So someone like me, who has a very good salary, is working very hard, is educated in the Canadian educational system—as a single woman, I would not be able to put down a down payment and get a mortgage for that same home. And so, young people are being priced out of

the market, because we don't have enough homes that are available to buy.

1350

So, Minister, why is it important that we continue increasing housing supply and take action to ensure that young people like me are not living in their parents' basement and can actually attain the Canadian dream of home ownership, which has become out of reach for so many young people and newcomers and visible minorities, in a city like mine of Mississauga?

Hon. Paul Calandra: And the reality is, too, for many young people, even if they have the down payment, they still can't get in, right? With the increase of interest rates in such a short period of time, it has priced out so many people from the housing market. Look, sometimes I get in trouble, but it is what it is.

My dad died when he was 48 years old. My mother was 39 years old and had four kids. If they wouldn't have been able to accomplish what he was able to accomplish, then together, we would have had a much different lifestyle and upbringing, because they had the ability to do what your mom was able to do. They had the ability to buy a home, and you know why they had the ability to buy a home? Because thousands of acres of land were made available for housing—millions of acres of land were made available for housing.

I have heard time and time and time again, "Wartime housing," "Wartime housing," "Wartime housing. Look at that." Wartime housing was brought throughout Canada on farmland, ostensibly, because that was what we had to do to bring—the soldiers were coming home; the millions of people that were being invited to come to this country to help build Canada—that's what we had to do then.

Right now, what do we have to do? We have to—and it's not funny. I love people who laugh about it, right? They laugh about it, right, you know, the young people getting out of their parents' basement—like it's funny. It's not just young people; it's new Canadians who have come here. And where are they? They're in basement apartments somewhere, working two or three shifts a day to try and make rent. That's the people that we have to try and help. So it might be funny to some people who have the benefit of a home right now, who put obstacles in the way of other people owning that home. I can tell you, it's not funny.

It's not funny for the guy who works at the Petro-Canada station. He's from India. He works two jobs. He works at Petro-Canada at 7 o'clock in the morning and at 5 o'clock at night, he goes to the Circle K and works until midnight, and then he does his online schooling. He has his family living in a basement apartment in Stouffville because that's all he could afford. He's far away. There is no gurdwara for him there. He's far away from family and friends, because that's all he could afford. I don't think that that's acceptable in our province. I don't think that's why people came here.

So when people find it funny, I find it insulting and I say very clearly: I will remove obstacles. I will get the job done. We will build 1.5 million homes, even if people

think it's funny and want to avoid that happening, because they already have the dream. For them, it's a reality. I don't find it funny.

I worked hard. My family worked hard. They have the Canadian dream, and I'm going to make sure that everybody else has it, whether the opposition supports us or not, or whether people find that funny.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you, Minister. In follow-up: In my city of Mississauga, our housing targets are 120,000 over the next 10 years, and it is unfortunate that, due to the lack of leadership at the city of Mississauga currently, they have only approved about 9,600 housing starts since the summer of 2022. So if we do simple math, we know that Mississauga is already behind in reaching the housing target starts.

So can you tell us a little bit more how we will work with our municipal partners to ensure that they have the supports they need, so that they can reach those housing target starts? Because if we don't, then more people like me and visible minorities and newcomers who are coming and settling in the region of Peel, will be left without a home.

Hon. Paul Calandra: First of all, cities like Mississauga have to recognize the fact that we have to build density around those infrastructure investments that we're making. We don't have time to review obvious areas of construction, so they have to come to terms with that. If we are going to build within the urban boundary, then that means we are going up. That means density will be higher. That means we have to look at more units on existing parcels of land. Those are the obstacles that we are going to remove.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Fifty seconds.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I will conclude by saying this: We have a federal government right now that has made an investment in housing, and it's a welcome investment in housing. But it's a \$15-billion investment to build 200,000 homes across the country. We heard earlier about \$9 billion is required for infrastructure in the province of Ontario that would build 1.5 million homes across all levels—market, rental, seniors, affordable, not-for-profit. That's the type of investment that we need to make, and that's what we're going to work on with our municipal partners and those communities that are available to do it through the Building Faster Fund. There are some ready to go, and we will support them to do that. The communities that need a little more extra time, more investment in infrastructure, we're going to help them too—because we'll meet the goal.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We're out of time. Thank you, everyone. Thank you, Minister, for coming.

I'd like to do a reminder that the deadline for filing written submissions and amendments to the bill is 5 p.m. today.

Is there any further business? MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I move that the committee enter closed session for the purpose of organizing committee business, and then also recess for 10 minutes for our colleagues to leave.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Is there any debate on the motion at all?

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A 10-minute recess, and then come back in camera for further business. Okay.

Yes. There's no debate or discussion, besides the one I'm having behind here? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? All right. I declare we have a 10-minute recess.

The committee recessed at 1357 and later continued in closed session.

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