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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

N° 4B

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Jeudi  
11 août 2022

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 August 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 août 2022

*Report continued from volume A.*

1530

STRONG MAYORS,  
BUILDING HOMES ACT, 2022  
LOI DE 2022 POUR DES MAIRES FORTS  
ET POUR LA CONSTRUCTION  
DE LOGEMENTS

Continuation of debate on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to special powers and duties of heads of council / Projet de loi 3, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs et fonctions spéciaux des présidents du conseil.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** Questions?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Congratulations to the minister, and I'm glad to see that you recovered well. I'm glad to see that you're feeling better.

You talked about the housing plan to build 1.5 million homes over the next decade. Those are all, by all accounts, new homes for first-time homebuyers. You talked about the missing middle.

In one of your comments, you mentioned that building these new homes will correct the monthly rental costs of tenants. I want to understand how you've come to that conclusion, how building those homes will correct that. Where in your plan does it—everybody wants people to buy their new homes; the first-time home. It's a very big milestone. But I also wanted to ask, in your plan of 1.5 million homes to be built, where are the homes that are geared to income for people on really low incomes, like ODSP and OW and seniors? Where are the homes for people with disabilities and people with developmental disabilities, where they need that supportive housing? Where is that in your plan to help all Ontarians thrive in their homes?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Thank you to the member opposite. I think what it comes down to and how we're going to get homes on the market is through supply. We see, as the minister and other speakers rightfully pointed out, that the demand on housing is only going to get worse from here. I think it's about giving the municipalities, and the mayor particularly, the ability to appoint individuals within his administration who share our vision of getting people into housing and tackling the affordability crisis.

I know first-hand that in the city of Toronto, this government has invested millions upon millions of dollars

into supportive housing, and I know we are going to continue to do that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** The member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** I first would like to congratulate the minister from York South–Weston for being elected in the House. It's great to have you here.

This past election, we made a clear commitment to the people of Ontario that we would keep costs down and build 1.5 million homes. I have two of the largest developments in my riding: the Brightwater development on the old Texaco refinery land and the Lakeview development on the old coal plant in Port Credit and Lakeview. I was wondering, how will these changes help us build more homes in areas like that?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I think there's a number of points this bill has pointed to to expedite the building of affordable housing, particularly with the goal of making it affordable. Particularly within this bill, when you look at the mayor's ability to build a coalition of like-minded individuals who—the mayor has been elected at large in their respective cities—it gives them the ability to drive that agenda forward.

As a Toronto city councillor, I have worked on housing projects for years that have never really been able to cut through the red tape to come to fruition. There's a lot of folks out there who want to build. I think that is what this bill is driving for and why it has my incredible support.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** Member from Toronto Centre.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Thank you very much, Minister, for your remarks, and it's great to serve with you here.

The report that came out from the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force did itemize that one of the goals that Ontario should set for itself is to build 1.5 million homes over 10 years, but nowhere in that 33-page report did I find that all 1.5 million homes had to be built in two cities exclusively under a strong-mayor system. Did I miss something reading that report, or can you identify for me the page where that is outlined?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I'd like to thank the member from Toronto Centre for the question. There has definitely been an outline that these regions, Toronto and Ottawa, are going to see a significant amount of people calling these cities home, and we see that. That's why I think, particularly with this bill, we are working with these cities to get shovels in the ground and working with these mayors and councils to get houses on the market so people can live and tackle the affordability crisis.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** Member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

**Mr. Rob Flack:** I've been afforded the opportunity to have the minister visit my riding already. Don't worry about being a little dizzy. We're all new here and we're all enjoying some of that experience.

This is a unique bill. Ontarians expect and deserve locally elected leaders who are actually able to get things done, as we promised in the election. Our government trusts Ontarians to elect the right leaders. That's why we're setting the bar higher for mayors and making it easier for them to be accountable based on the decisions they make. Coming from the world of business and industry, I understand. I've experienced accountability my whole life and I hope we all will share accountability here and understand the importance of it, especially in elected office.

So, based on that, under these proposed changes, what new abilities—and, I would add, accountabilities—will the mayors of Toronto and Ottawa have?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Thank you for the question. I think, fundamentally, the mayors are accountable to the people they are elected by in their respective regions; that is the ultimate test of accountability. Right now, we see that the mayor in Toronto, particularly, and in Ottawa—their vote is equal to another member of city council. But they are elected at large, and they answer to millions of people across their respective cities.

I think that the people in this province spoke loud and clear about getting shovels in the ground and getting houses on the market in the most expeditious way possible, and I think this legislation is going to achieve just that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** The member from Humber River–Black Creek.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I want to congratulate everyone here in the chamber, whether they were elected or re-elected. I also want to congratulate my friend and colleague on the other side there, not only for his election but for his appointment as minister. He was always a gentleman at city hall as I remember him.

My question is this: The minister was a city councillor. People went out there, they cast a vote, they put trust in him, and he had a voice on Toronto city council. But he is joining his colleagues now, in some sense, to undermine those voices: to weaken the voices relative to the mayor of the city of Toronto. But he himself was a councillor.

Why do you feel that it is democratic to go this way?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I believe that I am speaking on behalf of the people of the city of Toronto, and particularly of York South–Weston, who elected myself to this chamber, which is an absolute honour, but for all Ontarians—sitting on the government side—where, when Ontarians went to the polls just a few months ago, they supported a mandate to get shovels in the ground, to get housing on the market and to make life more affordable. I think that is the true test of what we are doing here as a government and speaking true to the people who put us here.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** The member for Kitchener South–Hespeler.

**Ms. Jess Dixon:** It is important for Ontarians to be able to hold their local governments accountable for the promises they make and the policies that they've undertaken. How is this proposed legislation going to increase accountability at the local level?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I'd like to thank my colleague for that question. I want to reiterate what I said before in the previous question: It's about giving the people who voted for those mayors the mandate to work with the provincial government to get shovels in the ground and to get housing built to make life more affordable. At the end of the day, democracy rests with the people who elect their respective governments. I know, as a previous Toronto city councillor, that this legislation will go a long way to helping ease the affordability crisis and the housing crisis here in the city of Toronto.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** It's good to be back in the House again. Congratulations to all of you for your re-election or your first election. It's quite an accomplishment, and it's really nice to be in the Legislature.

I'm proud to be here to speak to the strong mayors, more housing act. As the official opposition's housing critic, measures to address the housing affordability crisis are something that I think about every single day.

What I did notice when I first picked up the bill and when I attended the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's briefing on this subject is that the words "housing" or "homes" is not mentioned in the bill at all.

**1540**

This bill does bring me back to 2018, when, I recall, one of the Premier's first orders of business after winning the election in 2018 was to cut Toronto's wards from 45 to 24 in the middle of an election—I'm sure the minister is familiar with that—and also force Kingston and London to abandon their ranked ballot voting system—London had implemented it, and Kingston had approved it and was moving forward to enact it in the next election—and return to the traditional first past the post voting system.

It feels like history is repeating itself. Now, in 2022, one of the Premier's first orders of business is once again to meddle in municipal affairs, to the detriment of democracy.

Yesterday, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing did introduce the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act. To summarize, this bill is very heavy on consolidating power in the mayor's office in Toronto and Ottawa, and it's very light—in fact, I would call it as light as air—in addressing housing affordability and spurring new housing construction. As I mentioned, the word "housing" is not mentioned in the bill at all.

I want to start by summarizing what is in the bill. The residents of University–Rosedale are clear about what Bill 3 actually is, in contrast to what Bill 3 is messaged as by the government. In short, this bill gives the mayor of Toronto and the mayor of Ottawa additional powers that

are currently powers in council's realm. I want to summarize it and go through it in detail.

If this bill passes, the mayor will be able to appoint the municipality's chief administrative officer or delegate this decision to council, and they'll also be able to hire certain department heads. In the case of Toronto, that would include the TCHC, our community housing department. It would include the TTC, which is one of Toronto's biggest departments. What it won't include: appointing department heads such as the clerk, the treasurer, the integrity commissioner, the chief of police, the chief building officer, the medical officer of health and others.

That's a lot of power to give to one individual, especially in a city like Toronto where we have city councillors who are accomplished at what they do, who ran in democratic elections and who are already having challenges adequately representing the 100,000 or so people that they represent well at city council. Taking additional powers away from them and giving them to a mayor seems like an example of a stifling of democracy that doesn't seem necessary.

In addition, Bill 3, if passed, will allow the mayor to create new identified committees and appoint the chairs and vice-chairs of identified committees and local boards. To some extent mayors already do this, but this will make it impossible to delegate to council without provincial approval.

The proposed changes would empower mayors to direct items to council that could potentially advance a provincial priority and would also allow a mayor to direct staff to develop proposals to be brought forward for council consideration. How I imagine this to work: Let's say city council passes a measure around what kind of transit will be built and where, or what kind of housing development will be built and where. I can imagine that housing and transit are two priorities that the provincial government will allocate as priorities. However, we don't know the specifics yet because that will be decided by regulation. What is clear is that housing and transit are two huge issues that take up a lot of city council's time. Allowing one individual to veto democratic decisions that are made by city council once again seems like an unnecessary stifling of democracy.

The final piece that is most concerning, in my view, is the decision to give the mayor additional control over the municipal budget process. That's the biggest process, the biggest decision that a city council makes in a year. There are many bylaws that are passed throughout the year and then they get to the budgeting process and, even though they've been passed, they're not funded. So it really is the King Kong when it comes to bylaws and laws that are passed at city council.

This bill would give mayors the power to present a budget, and city council would have to get a two-thirds majority in order to veto that budget. So, in short, that gives the mayors a huge amount of power over the most important decision that city council makes every year. I think that's really concerning, and I'm not the only one who thinks that.

I want to summarize some of what stakeholders have had to say in response to this bill being announced in the dead of summer, in August, in a special legislative session when most people are on vacation, and one person that comes to mind is Mayor Watson, the outgoing mayor of Ottawa. His summary is: Don't do it.

"I don't see a need to give certain mayors more powers and veto power over duly elected councillors." And this is what Watson said in a statement on Tuesday after Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell's throne speech.

He continues, "What we have in place now, while imperfect, does create a system of checks and balances between the mayor and council... I have never asked for more powers and I would urge the government to not proceed with this aspect of the throne speech." And then it got turned into legislation.

That's from a mayor—if he had decided to run for another term, that's a mayor that this bill aims to help, and he's saying, "Hey, hold on."

When I read this bill, I also think about a very effective activist in Toronto called Dave Meslin. He is an individual who has done a lot of work on voting reform and he's recently written a book called *Rebuilding Democracy*. He talks about how our Legislatures in particular, including Queen's Park, should be reformed to be more democratic—not less democratic. And the reason why I read his book in July is because we just went through an election where we had the lowest voter turnout in election history at 43%. And what that tells us is that there are many people in Ontario who are really checked out. They don't participate in the civic engagement process. They don't participate in the decisions that affect our lives. They're not interested. In many cases, they don't see that politics is relevant to them or interesting to them or that decision-makers are listening to them and that they are accountable to them.

And that is a concern because we are living through a time of great consequence and crisis. We are living through history, yet so many Ontarians have checked out. And what I found so useful and interesting about Dave Meslin's book is that he talks about some of the things that we can do to reignite civic engagement and reignite democracy. Not just at city council, but also at places like Queen's Park—he used to be an aide to an MPP here. And that includes things like increasing democracy and civic engagement by—I'll give you a few examples that he writes in his book.

One is to increase representation at the local city council level. Instead of consolidating power within one individual, which this bill aims to do, his example that he would like us to consider is using a style more like what Montreal does, where there are local city councillors and local city councils. People can go and share their opinions about issues that affect them—you know, where parking is, local development, traffic—the issues that our city councillors deal with, but in a much more immediate fashion, where you've got a councillor representing maybe 10,000 people instead of, in the case of the city of Toronto, representing 100,000 people and they're completely

worked off their feet. And as we've seen with the city of Toronto, unfortunately, many good councillors are leaving.

He also speaks about changing the voting system to reflect our voter intentions, which means moving away from a first past the post system to some kind of system closer to proportional representation. So the will of the voters, the percentage of people who vote for a specific party, roughly represents the percentage of people who sit here in this Legislature. If 60% of people vote for more progressive parties, that would mean 60%, approximately, of the seats in this Legislature would be held by progressive MPPs, as well.

More time for deliberating bills—and this government does have, I would say, a track record of introducing a bill one day, ramming it through committee as quickly as possible, giving people maybe 24 hours' notice to sign up to committee and then doing the committee days one day after another in six-hour chunks. It's very difficult to come up with bills that best reflect the will of the people, come up with bills that are the best that they can be for the people of Ontario with those kinds of time frames and with that lack of public consultation.

**1550**

What I fear is that Bill 3, with this decision to consolidate power within the mayor's office, is yet another example of this government choosing to say, "We're not so interested in democratic process here and checks and balances. We're more interested in treating government and decision-making like it's a business." But there are consequences to that—many negative consequences.

I want to spend the final eight minutes of my time talking about housing, and the reason why is the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has talked at length about how this bill is designed to speed up housing construction so that we can get to this 1.5-million target in order to meet the needs of current and future Ontarians. That's the stated purpose of this bill. There is nothing to indicate that a strong mayor system is going to achieve this goal—there's nothing to indicate that—and I have yet to see any evidence except for messaging to suggest that it would.

If this government was interested in building more homes and tackling the affordable housing crisis, there are measures that have been introduced by your own task force—by your own task force—that I encourage you to develop into legislation and introduce here on the Queen's Park floor. They include moving forward on ending exclusionary zoning. This is an issue which could align left and right and centrist, and centrist experts and academics and politicians, who understand that ending exclusionary zoning is an effective way to build more affordable townhomes, duplexes and triplexes in existing neighbourhoods in order to meet housing demand. It is a win-win opportunity that we should be working across party lines in order to achieve. There is such an opportunity there, and this government's own housing task force has recommended it.

This government should and could move forward on addressing the issue of what kind of homes we are

building. When I look at the housing starts that Ontario is moving forward on, there has been an increase in condos, in purpose-built rentals and also in large multi-million dollar single-family homes that are way beyond the price reach of an everyday Ontarian.

When you look at the condos that are being built, the average size is about 600 square feet. These are not the kinds of homes that meet the critical need that we need to address in Ontario, which is finding homes for baby boomers who want to downsize, finding homes for students who don't want to spend three to four years living in a 600-square-foot home that costs \$2,500 to rent, and also those larger 1,400 to 2,000 square-foot townhomes, purpose-built rental three-bedroom apartments that can fit families that can't afford to spend \$1.5 million on a home. In order to meet those housing needs that have been identified by planners and experts, it's going to require the government to play a stronger role in regulating what kind of housing gets built.

I would really encourage this government to introduce legislation that focuses on that as well. This government could and should move forward on inclusionary zoning so that when there is a new development built, there are community benefits—parks, daycares—as well as affordable housing incorporated into these new developments.

The only municipality in Ontario that has an inclusionary zoning law is the city of Toronto. The challenge is that it doesn't go far enough, and it is still waiting for provincial approval. It's in this government's hands to move forward on the first inclusionary zoning law that should and could exist in Ontario. And if we had more inclusionary zoning laws, then we could not just build but also build affordable, which is also the goal here. It's extremely important, and I urge you to do that, to approve that. You don't even have to take it to legislation. The minister can just approve that, and I urge you to do that.

This government could and should move forward on properly investing in community housing and supportive housing. We have in Ontario, and especially in Toronto, the worst homelessness crisis we have seen in decades. In University–Rosedale, we continue to have people sleeping in parks because they have nowhere else to go. We have the hotels that have been on long-term contracts, housing people who were formerly homeless. Those contracts are due to expire and there's no clear plan about what is going to happen when those hotel contracts expire. We continue to see—it was in the news just recently; yesterday, I believe—that there has been an uptick in the number of people that have been turned away from shelters because there is no bed available. In order to address that crisis, it is not going to be the private market that is going to solve the housing crisis for people who are on social assistance. It's going to be government investment and government support.

That is why, when I read the 2022-23 budget from this government, I found it very disturbing to hear that the government had decided to cut an additional \$246 million from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing budget. What that means is there will be less money for

supportive housing and affordable housing for municipalities, including Toronto and Ottawa. When we're talking about addressing the housing crisis, additional funding for maintaining homes, maintaining community housing and building more supportive housing is really where we need to go—and this government is not going there.

There's also no plan to build affordable housing and non-market housing on public land. All the deals that this government has made to build housing on public land—the contracts have been secret and there's been no announcement, to the best of my knowledge, of any affordable housing requirement being included in any of those deals. I know there are some possible deals within the member for Toronto Centre's riding, around the foundry—

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** No.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Exactly. Thank you for correcting me. Good. I'll just go back to the original sentence then: There have been no signed contracts where there has been a firm affordable housing commitment when the government has leased out or sold off provincial public land.

In my view, in our view, provincial public land—which we have a lot of—should be used to build affordable housing and non-market housing, and we should establish a public builder to build housing at cost in order to do it.

What I find most disturbing and concerning about this bill, when we're talking about housing and housing affordability, is this government's decision to ignore the 1.4-million rental households that cannot afford the ever-increasing hikes in rent that they are experiencing—not just people who are forced to move, but also the 2.5% rent hike that will be coming in 2023. This is at a time when we have inflation at 8.1%. It's deeply concerning.

I urge this government, if you're serious about addressing housing affordability and the housing crisis, to move forward on some of these measures that we have presented to you today. Some of them are non-partisan. They are non-partisan solutions that we can get behind, and I urge you to do so as well.

What I'm also clear about is that Bill 3 is not about addressing the housing affordability crisis. It's really about consolidating power and not ensuring that there are proper checks and balances when it comes to us making decisions at a city level that ensure that we come up with the best laws possible so that everyone benefits. I urge you to introduce amendments within committee to look at this bill.

At this point, I am not in support of Bill 3.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** Questions? The member from Markham–Thornhill.

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You look good in the Chair as the Acting Speaker. Congratulations.

As a former city councillor for the city of Markham for 12 years, I have seen, through my eyes, the red tape and bureaucracy that is killing the housing supply market. We are in a housing crisis—a housing price crisis, I would say. I have three kids. They graduated. They can't even dream

to have houses in Markham or York region, or anywhere in the GTA or the Golden Horseshoe area.

I thank the member for her passionate speech. We are in a housing supply crisis. Why does the member opposite not believe that now we cannot only talk about things, but act? I think this legislation is giving the tools to bring more housing supply to Ontario.

**1600**

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Markham–Thornhill for your question. I have yet to see any evidence that suggests that having a strong-mayor system will lead to an increase in housing construction, and also, I have yet to see how a strong-mayor system will address the housing affordability crisis that Ontario is facing today.

What I do recommend this government look at is the recommendations from the Housing Affordability Task Force—not all of them; some of them are a little unusual. But some of them are measures that make a lot of sense, including moving forward on ending exclusionary zoning, moving forward with inclusionary zoning so we can really tackle the affordable housing piece, and also putting further investment into building supportive housing and affordable housing. Thank you for your question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** The member from Orléans.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on the appointment.

As was pointed out in your comments, the bill doesn't have anything that will explicitly create housing. In fact, what the bill does have is a veto. A veto is, of course, the ability to say no to things. It is not the ability to actually do things. So do you think that this government should really be in the business of giving people more power to say no, to stop things from happening, or do you think they should be in the business of moving Ontario forward?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to member for Orléans for that question. That's a really good way of explaining it, that this is a bill also about saying no, even though this bill is being messaged as a bill to get it done and saying yes.

I was also struck by, I believe, a comment made during question period about Ottawa's official plan and how we are still waiting for the government to approve that official plan. What I think is important to note is that when official plans are built, it means that the construction of homes in certain areas can proceed. So in some ways the government is making many steps right now where they're holding back the necessary housing construction we need in big cities like Ottawa instead of moving forward with them.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Across this province growth is happening. We have heard that one third of Ontario's growth over the next decade is expected to happen in Toronto and Ottawa. We know that we need to plan for this growth. For too many years we did not plan for the growth we are now seeing, and as a result we have a shortage of housing. Does the member not agree we need

to provide municipalities with the tools they need to plan for growth?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for your question. You bring up a very good point, and it’s a point that I agree with: There are many measures that we need to take to address the housing affordability crisis, and tackling the housing shortage is one of them. I have spoken to many experts—academics, politicians, planners—and many of them are very clear that we do not have enough homes that meet the need of even current Ontarians let alone future Ontarians, and we need to build more homes. There are tools that this government can give municipalities in order to build the kind of homes that we need. They include planning changes and they also include funding so that we can build the kind of supportive housing, non-market housing and affordable housing that we need. But thank you for raising that issue of the housing shortage.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stephen Crawford):** The member from London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I’d like to thank my colleague the member for University–Rosedale for her remarks and for the comments in particular that she made about homelessness in Toronto. My community, London, is experiencing a crisis of homelessness like we’ve never seen before—167 preventable deaths of people living in homelessness over the last three years. We had a coalition of front-line workers who came together, called themselves The Forgotten 519 and held a hunger strike at the steps of city hall to draw attention to the urgent need for measures to address homelessness and create affordable housing.

Can the member tell us what this bill will do to help deal with the affordable housing crisis that we have in our province, to help ensure that people who are living in homelessness have access to safe, decent and affordable places to live?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member from London West for that question. The homelessness crisis in London is deeply concerning. I’m pleased that you’re raising that in the Legislature. There is nothing in the bill that suggests that giving mayors additional powers will mean that the homelessness crisis will be addressed any quicker.

What I am very concerned about is this government’s decision to not use the power this government already has to address the homelessness crisis in Toronto and Ottawa. Instead of cutting funding to supportive housing and affordable housing, the Ontario government should be increasing funding to build supportive housing and affordable housing. Supports for mental health, for addictions, for supportive housing are absolutely critical as well. We shouldn’t just be building the homes; we need to be building the wraparound supports that go with them. And I’m not seeing that done in an adequate way in this budget.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** As a former mayor in a small community, I can assure this House of a few things. First,

as has already been stated, the mayor has only one single vote, the same as every other member of council. This is true whether the councillor was elected by 2% or 3% of the people as opposed to the mayor, who was elected by 100% of the people in the municipality. Secondly, I can assure this House as a mayor, that the residents, the ones who approach me in the grocery store or the gas station, expected that as a mayor I could unilaterally act to move projects forward.

So to the member from University–Rosedale, I ask, shouldn’t someone elected by all the residents actually have more influence on the municipality than a single councillor? Isn’t that actually more democratic to have this bill put forward?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington. I can speak about my experience living in Toronto. We’re a huge city, and city councillors work extremely hard in order to get elected. They represent and they need to secure the support of over 100,000 people in order to hold that seat at city council.

What I also find, as someone who regularly contacts city council, my local city councillor, and interacts with constituents who do, is that they want their city councillor to have influence too. They want to be able to approach the city councillor and have their issues raised in city council, and they want the city councillor to have significant influence over the budget.

The mayor in Toronto in particular already has a considerable amount of power. I don’t believe it helps democracy to give one individual even more power than they already have, and I really question this idea that it will lead to the construction of more housing as well. But thank you for your comments and your perspective.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I don’t believe there’s time for another question, so we’ll call for further debate.

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I’m delighted to rise and speak to Bill 3, Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022. As this is my first substantive opportunity to address the House since the election, I’d like to begin by thanking the residents of Orléans for once again putting their faith in me—for the sixth time. It’s been an honour to represent the community that my wife, my son, Stephen, and I call home on the Ottawa Catholic School Board, at city hall, and of course here in the Legislature.

We’ve seen a lot of change in Orléans over the years. As one of the fastest-growing parts of the city of Ottawa, that includes thousands of new homes, new neighbourhoods with new neighbours, a dozen new parks, a new recreation centre and pool, the Millennium Park sports expansion and a multi-sport stadium at Millennium Park.

Orléans is seeing a diversity of housing types: single-family and townhomes. But we’re also seeing medium-density, back-to-back, midrise apartments and the first tall buildings that will be built along the Trim Road LRT extension.

Cumberland Housing has built market, rent-to-income and subsidized units in Orléans. We’ve welcomed Habitat for Humanity and their home ownership model. We’ve

seen urban expansion in the areas of Orléans to make that make sense, to allow new families and young families the opportunity to call Orléans home themselves.

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All of this and more, Mr. Speaker, was achieved without a veto. It was achieved without having universal and unilateral control over the budget. It was achieved through hard work. It was achieved through consensus-building. It was achieved through putting common sense into action—some arm-twisting, to be sure, but otherwise that's known as good politics.

Politics is the art of the possible. It's about building consensus to move your agenda forward. When you tell someone you're doing something, that's called dictating. That is not consensus-building. That is not good politics.

Last fall, the city of Ottawa approved its new official plan, an official plan to comply with this government's housing priorities: this government's priorities for affordable housing, this government's priorities for transit-oriented development, this government's priorities for infill and density. Last fall, the elected members of Ottawa city council came to consensus to achieve that plan to put into effect this government's housing priorities. Mr. Speaker, that plan remains sitting on a desk at the Ministry of Housing, awaiting approval—almost a year. The city of Ottawa's democratically achieved consensus approach to planning to create housing, affordable and market-based, with density and height and urban expansion to bring in new housing options and families is sitting on the minister's desk for almost a year. So if we're talking about ways to accelerate housing, how about we approve the plans by the democratically elected councils that have already been put in place to achieve this government's stated goals? But, of course, approving Ottawa's official plan isn't part of this bill.

Do you know what else isn't a part of this bill? Any mention of the word "housing." The word "housing" doesn't appear in the bill. The word "home" doesn't appear in the bill. The word "zoning" doesn't appear in the bill. There is no mention of construction or land use planning. There is no mention of affordability or density or development in the bill. So let's not call this a housing bill; this is a municipal governance bill. That's what it is. Let's call it what it is. It's a municipal governance bill.

And frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is not even the most important municipal governance issue facing Ontario. What big cities in Ontario have been facing—cities like Ottawa and Brampton and Mississauga and Barrie—is a raft of serious misconduct by members of their councils.

In Ottawa, a city councillor was found to have committed egregious acts of sexual, emotional and psychological harassment against his staff over a time frame of years. At least six different women have come forward to file complaints against Councillor Chiarelli to do things like visiting nightclubs and strip clubs to try to recruit volunteers, pressuring them to go braless and wear revealing tops, pressuring them to perform oral sex on strangers in exchange for cash. This is an elected member of Ottawa city council, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chiarelli remains in office, collecting a taxpayer-funded salary and pension benefits, and is considering running for re-election this fall. There are already five candidates registered in that ward; anyone who knows anything about municipal politics knows that in a six-person race, you don't need a heck of a lot of votes to win.

In Brampton, according to the integrity commissioner and upheld by a judicial review, Councillor Dhillon engaged in inappropriate sexual misconduct. The integrity commissioner further reported that if she had had the authority, she would have recommended that Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon was dismissed as a councillor. Given that council cannot remove elected officials from office, city council passed a unanimous motion asking Mr. Dhillon to resign. In an impassioned speech, Mr. Speaker—I've listened to it several times now—the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, who was a Brampton city councillor at the time, asked Mr. Dhillon to resign 76 times, because his victim asked him to stop 76 times.

In Mississauga, a city councillor was being anonymously tormented for a period of months in a manner so disturbing, causing so much anxiety and fear and stress, that there was an investigation. It was revealed that this torment—threats and behaviour—was being perpetrated upon her by one of her council colleagues. It created such anxiety that she chose to resign from city council. This councillor, as I understand it, remains in office.

The common thread is that municipal councils who have had to deal with this issue believe that there must be a process to remove bad actors for this kind of egregious behaviour—the kind of behaviour any employee in any workplace in Ontario and across Canada would be fired for. That is a municipal governance issue worth addressing, Mr. Speaker.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has recommended a process involving the integrity commissioner and a judicial review to remove poorly behaving elected officials—egregious behaviour—from council. That recommendation was signed by the current Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

As the Minister of Housing today earlier indicated, last spring the government at the time unanimously supported the bill to create an integrity commissioner and a judicial process to remove municipal officials from office for egregious misbehaviour such that I described. There was an opportunity to bring that as part of this package, Mr. Speaker. The government has it. The government is working on their own bill. I know; we've seen it. The opposition critic has seen it. We were briefed by the deputy minister on it last fall. Instead of including it in this bill that's about municipal governments, they decided to leave it on a shelf; they decided to put a power grab for two mayors—who, by the way, haven't asked for it—ahead of providing justice for women who have been sexually harassed, tormented and psychologically abused.

I know one of the reasons why Mayor Watson in Ottawa hasn't asked for it—he hasn't asked for this power. In fact, he's come out publicly and said he wouldn't want

this power. In fact, he's publicly come out this morning and asked the Premier to drop his bill and to support mine instead. He doesn't want this power, he doesn't need this power, because he's been a good politician. He's achieved 98% of his agenda by building consensus, by getting people to support his point of view, to put money where he thinks it needs to be put to build the kinds of infrastructure that needs to be built in Ottawa, and we've seen thousands and thousands and thousands of homes built in Ottawa. There's been no delay in construction in Ottawa caused by administration. It's been caused by the lack of capacity within the industry to actually do it, the lack of trained workers which the government is working on and is taking so much credit trying to put into action. It's largely not because of administration, Mr. Speaker.

My time is running out. I will leave you with one thought: You've heard the actions that I've described in Mississauga and Brampton and in Ottawa. There are cases in Barrie and across Ontario as well. Imagine if those things had been committed by the mayor? Imagine if those things had been committed by the mayor of Toronto or Ottawa after they had these strong powers? Who in this room would want the mayor of Ottawa or Toronto, having sexually harassed and demeaned staff or colleagues, to have the ability to unilaterally present the budget, the ability to say no to anything he or she wanted to do—or that council wanted to do, I should say—to be able to put a cabal of seven or eight people in a room and because you're in charge of the budget, give them a pay increase for being on your board of control and nullifying the veto opportunity, Mr. Speaker? Imagine if that person had committed these things and imagine there wasn't a process to remove that person from office, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Questions to the member?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Thank you to the member for Orléans for his debate on this bill, Bill 3, giving mayors more power. We know how outgoing Mayor Watson of Ottawa feels on the position of this bill. He doesn't believe it's necessary and doesn't want it to pass.

1620

Shortly, there's going to be an Association of Municipalities of Ontario meeting just come next week. I'm wondering if all of us here who are attending will be asking those other mayors what their opinions are on this bill and how they see it benefiting or the pitfalls of doing this. I also encourage everyone who is running as mayor to come out in those cities as what their position is on that, and I say that because this bill wasn't in the platform of the PCs during this election. If people really wanted that when—one member talked about how mayors are elected by 100% of their city—then you know what? That should have been in the platform of the PCs in the election, and it wasn't. So it's a little bit disheartening to realize that they're pushing it so hard. Knowing that it's something that's going to make municipalities better and apparently connected to mayors having power to build homes, why wasn't it in their platform? Can you speak to that, please?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Certainly, I agree that as an elected official, you have a responsibility to present your priorities

and your thoughts to the public before you seek office. That is what elections are about. And to expect that the 14 million or 15 million people in Ontario would have read the Premier's memoir to get insights into his thoughts about municipal government, I think, is a stretch beyond belief.

I will be consulting people at AMO to understand what they think about this—not just the mayor of Ottawa, whom I've already spoken to, but others. Maybe officials from Brampton and Mississauga and Hamilton want those powers in those communities. Why have they been left out, and what are the criteria by which the minister is going to let them into this scheme for strong mayors? The minister in debate earlier said it was all up here, the thoughts on how those new municipalities would enter this new scheme of strong mayors. I would like to understand the minister's thoughts about how he's going to let them in.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** As many of you know, I used to be a mayor for quite a number of years—for 12 years—in a wonderful municipality. I worked with what I would say were the highest-quality individuals as councillors—absolutely fantastic people. We worked for many, many years and built consensus for many, many years on a lot of projects that drove the community forward that I led.

But we didn't drive everything forward. We didn't get all the projects done that I would have wanted to have seen done. As a matter of fact, there was housing that could have been built that was not built, that left me wishing when I went home at the end of the day that I had some way, somehow to get that housing built for the people that needed it.

There's a bill before us that is going to allow the mayors in the two biggest cities of this province to get that done. And I'm talking from the perspective of a mayor that was in a small town, that went home at night wishing he could build more housing. But multiply that, extrapolate that over the vast numbers of homes that get built in, again, the two biggest cities in Ontario.

My question is, quite simply, why don't you want to build more homes in Ontario?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** There is nothing in this bill that would allow mayors to build more homes unless you are proposing that the mayor will spend city money doing it. If your proposal is that the mayor will spend city taxpayer money building more homes, then, yes, the mayor will have unilateral authority to budget city money to do that.

He or she will not have the power to unilaterally make zoning changes. He or she will be able to veto a zoning change but he will not be able to do one—a veto doesn't turn a vote into a yes. You know that, working in municipal politics. That's not how municipal governance works. A veto is a no. This bill has no provision that says—the mayor can put something forward; it still has to pass a vote. If it doesn't pass a vote, it doesn't happen. He can veto someone stopping something. He can veto someone doing something, but he or she won't have the

ability to actually do anything on their own, unless that is to spend city money doing it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, I'll recognize the member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you to the independent member for your presentation.

In St. Paul's, we have roughly 60% or so residents who are renters, and I know there's always a concern around affordable housing.

We have a constituent right now who we're supporting, or trying to support. This is a constituent who has a disability, is eager and desperate for rent-geared-to-income, which they cannot find, and is literally considering MAID, medical assistance in dying, as an alternative.

I'm wondering, do you really see the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act as a piece of legislation that resoundingly says that a mayor—the mayor of Toronto, for instance—or that the Premier of Ontario is one who cares about the plight of folks who are desperately seeking housing, who are underemployed or unemployed, or who are experiencing homelessness? How is this bill going to help end speculation? How is this bill going to end the soaring costs of rents in our province? What is this bill going to do to actually advocate for people who need real affordable housing, who are seeking rent-geared-to-income so that they do not have to live on the streets in this hot season or in our foreshadowing of winter?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you very much for the question.

As I mentioned in my remarks—and I don't believe I was the only one—the word “housing” doesn't appear in the bill, the word “home” doesn't appear in the bill, the word “rent” doesn't appear in the bill, “affordability” doesn't appear in the bill. We're talking about density, zoning and land use planning. None of that appears in the bill.

There is nothing in the bill that will guarantee or ensure that any new housing is built. It will allow the mayor to unilaterally dictate the budget. So if the mayor wants to spend city money building housing, the mayor will be able to do that. But that is the only power in this bill that can possibly lead directly to more housing.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, the member for Beaches–East York.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** First of all, I'd like to thank the residents of beautiful Beaches–East York for sending me to this beautiful chamber, to Queen's Park. I'm very appreciative of that and honoured to be here. I'm looking forward to working with everyone here.

In my eight years of experience at Toronto city council, I liked to work across party lines and collaboratively with other politicians to build consensus and get things done for the greater good, get amazing motions and initiatives passed.

In your experience—you were a city councillor in Ottawa, I believe, for 10 years—I wonder, could you not get your terrific initiatives passed, working collaboratively with your colleagues and the mayor, without having these extra powers?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Congratulations on your election. It has been a pleasure working with you these last number of weeks.

Yes, we were able to get a lot done. As I mentioned, we got the Millennium sports complex built, an \$8-million park. Not a single dollar of taxpayer money went into that park. We got it built working with home builders and the industry, to build that \$8-million facility for our community, working in consensus with home builders.

When I got elected, there was actually no plan to bring light rail to Orléans. Orléans will now be the only suburban community in Ottawa to get light rail, as a result of the work that I did, and that was through consensus and common sense.

The other important part of legislation is consultations, you mentioned, which is why I was so surprised that last Thursday night, at the Navan Fair—a beautiful community in the riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. At the Navan Fair, with Mayor Watson, we were chatting for a couple of hours after the opening ceremonies, and he mentioned that last Thursday, less than a week ago, he had still not been consulted about what the strong-mayors bill would have in it. The Premier and the minister have still declined his requests for a conversation about it next week during AMO.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate? The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

1630

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off, I would like to congratulate you on your re-appointment as the Speaker of the House and, of course, welcome all new members to the House, my returning colleagues and all members on the other side of the House as well.

I'd also like to thank—this is the first opportunity I've had to stand and speak in the House since returning—the people of Vaughan–Woodbridge for the resounding support that I got from them to return back to the House and to continue the work we started.

It's an honour for me to be here to speak about the Strong Mayor, Building Homes Act that's been brought forward by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Our government trusts Ontarians to elect the right local leaders who can take responsibility and get things done. The proposed strong-mayor legislation would make it so that the mayors of Toronto and Ottawa have more responsibility regarding provincial-municipal priorities, including building the much-needed 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. As the population of Ontario has grown, we all know that housing construction has not kept pace. Due to this, families across Ontario are not able to own their own homes. Too many families are already struggling with housing and the rising cost of living.

As Ontario's minister responsible for mental health and addictions, I've seen and I've heard first-hand how the housing crisis is affecting families and their mental health. The recently graduated, new families, young immigrants—they're all facing anxiety, and that is a serious issue that impacts on every member of the family. Sound

mental health comes from economic stability and the fulfillment of basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. Housing is one of the issues that is jeopardized through unavailability.

Mr. Speaker, I have constituents who call my office worried about the skyrocketing cost of rent. They're competing with people who could be in the housing market, but are priced out due to a lack of supply. The Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act will empower municipalities like Toronto and Ottawa to put shovels in the ground, increase the housing supply and lower the pressure on the thousands of renters who call Toronto and Ottawa home. I worry that some opposition to this bill may be coming from those who would otherwise not want to share space in their cities.

Ontario is a big province. We attract young families, migrant youth and immigrants from across the world. We cannot shut ourselves off and block newcomers from the great place we call home. To be blunt, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act is designed to build bridges, not walls. This government seeks to make Ontario a more accessible place for all.

The construction of 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years is one of a number of initiatives that are being put forward by our government to address the housing shortage. Ontario is committed to supporting municipalities, and focused on improving planning policies and cutting red tape to get homes built faster. One of our government's priorities is increasing the housing supply, which we know is a shared priority with our municipal partners. The proposed changes would help give increased housing supply in growing municipalities by speeding up local planning approvals.

Mr. Speaker, another reason this bill should pass is the creation of a housing supply implementation team, a group of municipal leaders and industry experts, to engage with every affected community. This isn't just another task force. If we're to succeed in building 1.5 million homes over 10 years, we need a long-term commitment from a dedicated team of citizens and experts. It's a perfect marriage: the expertise of home builders who have worked in one of the world's hottest real estate markets for decades, combined with the on-the-ground knowledge of local leaders who can speak to the needs and worries of their constituents.

Those against this bill worry about the lack of accountability, that the bill will prevent municipalities from representing themselves. I would argue that with the formation of this team they are given a seat at the table.

Ontario is setting the bar higher for mayors and making it easier to hold them accountable based on the decisions they make. Ontario is counting on them to cut red tape and get housing built faster so that more families can realize the dream of attainable home ownership. Our government is committed to keeping costs down.

As well, my colleagues have spoken at length about the massive labour shortage our province is facing. Over 300,000 skilled jobs need to be filled. While people may move here for opportunity, they only stay if they can plant

roots by finding a home. This is a key component of any stable, welcoming place to grow: It's a place where you can find and build your home. If we're to fill this labour shortage and ensure it stays filled, we must guarantee that our workers will have somewhere to live where they can plant their roots and raise their families, and this is what is necessary if we are to succeed as a province.

I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for bringing this much-needed legislation forward and leading a consultation process that produced this bill. I really believe that building new homes will not only increase supply but also lead to better mental wellness for the people of this province; for those who want to have a home; for those who are anxious today looking for homes; for our youth who are in school, in university, wanting to plan and to live their dreams, much the same way their parents did when they came to this country.

Mr. Speaker, I look back and reflect on my parents, the dream that they had as immigrants, coming to a land that they knew little or nothing about—no language. These are the people we're trying to attract to the province to fill some of those gaps. They need a place to live, they need a place to grow, and that stability in providing more opportunities to these individuals, especially in the two largest cities in the province, is going to make a difference and ensure that these people not only come to this country to work and fill those jobs and start to build a home and start to build a life here—because ultimately, we want them to stay here and have the same opportunities other immigrants who came to this country had.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Questions?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I actually have a question related to London—I understand that you visited London a little while ago—about the housing issue and about mental health. The city of London representatives were very clear in asking you about—housing isn't just a housing issue but also a health issue, because we have a very serious problem with mental health and addictions in London and the actual services and the community access to those programs that people can't get.

Minister, can you explain what you're prepared to do to help the people of London access mental health and addictions services in order to ensure that they can get the health care they need? And then hopefully with this new proposal of 1.5 million homes, there will be something in there for true affordable housing for people who need it.

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thank you for that question. Mental health and addictions are issues that are of concern to me and have been long before I came to the House. We all know that when we talk about mental health, one of the social determinants of health that underlies many of the issues is lack of housing.

One of the things that this legislation does that I'm very happy with, especially starting with the two largest cities in the province, is that it will start to address the housing issues. And it's been made very clear in the House, and in other opportunities that the minister has had to speak about housing and this legislation, that it is for all kinds of houses. When we're talking about the 1.5 million homes,

the 1.5 million is all types of housing. Supportive housing, transitional housing, pre-treatment housing: These are all things that I have a keen interest in seeing built as part of that pathway to treatment to assist individuals who are suffering from mental health or addictions issues.

We know that this is an important aspect in doing a development treatment plan. I hope you support this legislation on the basis of expanding and building that continuum care for the people of the province.

1640

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

**Mr. Rob Flack:** I enjoyed your remarks, Minister, and I think we all know that this legislation is designed to give the mayors the tools to cut red tape that's slowing down construction. I think we can all agree to that. And checks and balances, I hope, are going to be in place, because that adds up to accountability. Based on that and my earlier question, what checks and balances are going to be in place to ensure that the job really does get done in a timely manner?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thank you for that question. Of course, the accountability piece is built into the legislation with the veto power.

But, I want to speak specifically on Toronto and Ottawa and why those cities are so important. You're correct, the comment that was made earlier about London—I did visit. But I've also visited London and I've seen the situation in Toronto. We do need to build more housing, and it's not just for the homeless. Across the board, we need to build more housing; we need to give power and we need to support the development of a strategy that will see those homes built. We came off of one of the most successful years in construction last year, and I think this legislation is going to continue the work that started in our first mandate with the number of homes that were built. It's going to create the continuum, again, of support that's necessary for everyone, regardless of whether they are presently homeless or first-time homebuyers or looking to change the places where they're living. It will also form the basis, I believe, of other work that will be done in other parts of the province with the experience that we will garner by the work that we do in Toronto and Ottawa.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have time for one more brief question.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Vaughan–Woodbridge for your speech and congratulations, also, on your re-election in this House. My question is, how exactly will a strong-mayor system build more homes? How will that work, exactly?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** I think the way it's going to work is by allowing focus to be placed on the requirement to build the 1.5 million homes. So what it will do is force attention to the building process. It will reduce the red tape and allow for the construction of the homes and, again, allow conversations to take place to determine the type of homes that need to be built.

I think it is a piece of legislation that focuses the attention and creates an agenda item that needs to be

pursued by those municipalities, and I think other mayors will see the success of this and look to expand this into their jurisdictions, as well. I truly believe it will make a difference in the development of additional—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much.

Further debate?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It's really a pleasure to rise here today to speak to this new bill presented by the government which has the name Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022.

I have to say, I've been sitting and listening to my colleagues across the way in the government speak about this legislation, and I've been waiting and listening to the questions and answers, as well. I've been waiting to be convinced, as my colleague from University–Rosedale just asked: How would this legislation actually build homes? Because, in the title of this legislation, it says, "building homes." Yet, when you look at this legislation, there is nothing here that speaks to construction or housing. Those words don't even appear here.

So, to me, Mr. Speaker, this appears like a bill designed to do something completely different under the umbrella, or under the auspices, of actually building homes, and why does the government want to do that or label it that way? Because they know that people are desperate for homes. But not just any homes: affordable homes. Again, I was waiting to be convinced, because in my community, which is—I represent a riding in downtown, west-end Toronto. First of all, probably more people are working in the trades in my community than probably any other riding in this province, I would argue; certainly, many more members of construction trade unions. People there rely on that industry but also, increasingly, people are very, very deeply concerned, and I've noticed over the last 10-odd years or more that concern become really endemic in my community. People are very worried. If they are fortunate enough to have their own home and own their own home, they're very, very deeply concerned that their children or their grandchildren will never, ever be able to afford to live in the community in which they were raised. I guarantee you they won't be able to—there is no question—and I know that this issue is not just unique to my community at all. It's happening across this province.

During the last election—I canvass between elections a lot, and one thing I would say I really noticed this time compared to 2018 was how much more intense that had become. The four more years of no action from this government were leaving people very deeply concerned, and that included plans that were not being approved—not necessarily at the municipal level, either, but at other levels. People were very open, as well, I would say—more open than ever—to building density in our community.

And so there has been a real shift in how people come to approach these issues and, yes, the speed with which they want it to happen, but also, I will add, the desperate need for communities to be part of the conversation. That's no small thing. When big towers are going up all around your community, people want to see them now.

That is a shift. That is a change. People are willing to see it. They are like, “Okay, yes, this giant tower is going to loom over my little house, but it’s okay, because I know there will be housing in there that people are going to need. My family is going to need that.”

“Will my family be able to afford it, though?” That’s the question. Where will those people all get the community services the rest of us rely on? What’s going to happen to our community’s schools? These are the kinds of questions that come up on every single doorstep, I can assure you.

Speaker, I’m going to get back to that again in a minute, but I want to say that July 4 might have been over a month ago, but for Conservatives and for this government it seems to be the week to celebrate all things American, at least from a policy perspective. First we had the health minister musing about bringing for-profit health care to Ontario, then we had the Minister of Education selling another direct payment to school-aged kids so they could purchase private tutoring, and now we have the municipal affairs minister bringing in a bill to create a very American-style strong-mayor system for Toronto and Ottawa. This is the bill that, again, we’re going to be speaking about today.

The tabling of this bill, I will also add, represents the second—maybe even the third now—attempt by this Conservative government to change the rules of municipal government while an election is actually under way, and is another attempt to, in that sense, I think, weaken local democracy and concentrate more power in the hands of the Premier and his ministers.

The title, as I mentioned earlier, suggests that this bill is somehow about housing, but beyond that rather clever little title, there is literally nothing in this bill about building homes—nada. There is nothing in this bill that implements even a single recommendation of the government’s own Housing Affordability Task Force. Faced as we are with such a serious lack of affordable housing and protections to keep existing housing affordable, that is truly shameful. It is such a missed opportunity, and it makes this—what I’m just going to call a power grab—even more egregious, to pretend that it’s about addressing the needs of our two biggest cities and not really doing anything to accomplish that.

What Toronto and Ottawa really need is a provincial government that will be a partner, not an overseer. Our systems of government are exclusive, with specific powers and specific responsibilities, and guess what? The Premier is not the boss of Ontario cities. With this bill, he becomes just a little bit closer to that.

I have to say, as somebody who has been living in this city now for more than 25 years, that this is what this is all about. Let’s not fool ourselves. This is what this is all about, and you can’t possibly look at this legislation without considering this Premier’s history in the municipality in which he served as a councillor and his brother served as the mayor and the failures that they experienced there. Thank goodness, frankly, because he tried to do some stuff in our city, and he failed.

I just want to point out one of the things that I think we in Toronto remember all too well, and that was, when he was a Toronto city councillor, the current Premier actually road-tested this whole scenario, this kind of populist bent on crushing the official plans of the city. He tried to strike a unilateral deal to undermine Waterfront Toronto and hand-pick developers to build a luxury yacht club—because we really need that—a megamall and a Ferris wheel by the lake, with little or no parkland that was public. I can tell you, I thank the stars every day that that ridiculous scheme failed. It was an embarrassment. I really do believe—I’m just going to say it—that’s what this is all about: Somebody got their nose out of joint because they didn’t get to do everything that they were told they were somehow entitled in this lifetime to do. But we live in a democracy, and luckily, we live in a city where the city councillors, including a lot of people who supported this councillor and the mayor at the time, stood up and pushed back. Thank goodness.

**1650**

Speaker, it was four years ago when this House sat all night—I remember some of my colleagues brought their pyjamas—with NDP MPPs fighting to delay a Conservative bill that would take an absolute sledgehammer to Toronto city council in the middle of an election campaign. While we fought in this place, I think many of you here will remember, citizens rallied outside Queen’s Park. You could hear the chants through the walls. Many of us, myself included, were actually ejected from this chamber because we felt so strongly about how anti-democratic this legislation was, as did our communities.

Yet this majority government—you got it again—passed the bill, and candidates, people who had been nominated, who were already raising money and had campaign offices and lots of volunteers and staff, found themselves without a ward to run in. But that wasn’t bad enough. You can say, “Okay, so they didn’t get to run,” and all that, but what ended up happening was, these super-wards were created. That meant that city councillors had double the residents to represent in this city. Let me tell you what that means. That means double the planning applications.

I know many of you have been elected here at the municipal level, so you know the kind of personal, direct constituency work that many councillors really pride themselves on. I have to say, that has become very, very difficult, almost impossible. I’ve watched colleagues of all political stripes at city council here in Toronto really struggle with that. I’ve seen my own constituents not be as well served, frankly, as they deserve to be. It’s very unfortunate. Even with some more staff and some more resources, what we’re seeing now, as well, is an exodus of experienced city councillors from Toronto city hall, because the pressure of this job now has become absolutely outrageous. If you compare other cities of this size and how many city councillors and local representatives they have, it’s an embarrassment that Toronto doesn’t have that—that our citizens, our residents, can’t be served that way. It is very unfortunate. I think we’re seeing

the impact now very much of this government's actions, which are directly responsible for a lack of service that residents and constituents in the city of Toronto experience to this day. This government is directly responsible for that.

I remind the House of this because it illustrates the problem when another level of government chooses to make very short-sighted changes to the fundamental structures of our institutions. Those consequences reverberate.

City councillors are directly responsible to their constituents, just like we are, yes. They know the neighbourhoods block by block, the community associations and, yes, where the latest pothole is—believe me; and I hear that too. This bill seeks to weaken the role of those councillors and concentrate significant new powers, as I mentioned earlier, in the hands of the mayor. Maybe those cities will elect benevolent, progressive, smart mayors who would use those powers for good, but this bill makes some of those powers contingent on provincial priorities, and that's another very important element of this bill which I don't want to lose sight of. Who determines those priorities? The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

So if I'm a resident of Toronto, which I happen to be, or Ottawa, where my parents live, in Vanier, my local city councillor is going to have less of a role in the next term, and the agenda for my city stands to be largely influenced by a provincial minister at Queen's Park. You may think that sounds like a great thing to all of you, but I assure you, it is not healthy for the people of Ottawa and Toronto. This legislation purports to be about making life better for those people, I guess—why else would you target Toronto and Ottawa? But I've got to say, for the folks who live in Toronto and in Ottawa, that doesn't ring true.

Our province is reeling from a health care crisis, a continuing pandemic, people are seeing costs explode for the most basic staples, and this government is choosing to once again continue its fixation with messing around with municipal politics? I don't get it.

They say that it's about housing, but there is, again, nothing in this bill that deals with that. There's nothing in this bill that ends exclusionary zoning or enables the construction of more affordable missing middle housing options. That's what we need. There is nothing that ensures the construction of new, affordable, or non-market homes. There is nothing that ensures the construction of new basement apartments or granny flats. There is nothing that expands inclusionary zoning. There is nothing that establishes a public agency to build homes for people unserved by the private market. These are the things people in this city want and people in Ottawa want, and this is the kind of stuff that will make a difference.

The housing crisis does deserve real, urgent action from this provincial government. I want to say, for too long, our municipalities have been forced to cover the costs associated with increasing homelessness, and you've heard my colleagues on this side of the House and the official opposition speak to this. Toronto Community Housing, for example—and I have many Toronto Community Housing

units in my riding—has a really significant repair backlog. I challenge anyone here to spend a night living in Toronto Community Housing. Some of my colleagues grew up in Toronto Community Housing; they know. Go door to door in a Toronto Community Housing building right now. It is appalling. There are some great buildings and there are some wonderful people who work in Toronto Community Housing, and it must just destroy them to see the state of things. You will recall one of these Toronto Community Housing buildings has been recently in the news, with the collapse of a ceiling at Swansea Mews which resulted in the emergency relocation of 400 [inaudible]. TCHC has only begun to make progress on this repair backlog, and that was only, let's face it, because of some funding that came from the federal government.

I want to say to the people in Pelham Park and in other Toronto Community Housing buildings in my riding, on Rankin Crescent: Nothing in this bill is going to help you. And I'm sorry about that, because this government has an opportunity here and I'm hoping they will listen to us and will actually agree to some amendments so we can build good legislation that will help you.

The provision of front-line social services has also been downloaded to municipalities. As more and more people end up homeless—and I spoke about this yesterday in my response to the throne speech—our shelters have been unable to keep up with the demand. Data from the city showed that an average of 40 people per night are turned away from shelters in Toronto, and that's been over the last year and a half. Forty people a night. Where do those folks end up sleeping? In parks or wherever they can find a safe spot. That's the reality of not just this government; that's the reality of decades of provincial governments who have shirked responsibility to keep people housed.

Now, this government talks about housing, and I will give them that: They talk a good game. But it always seems that there's only one solution, and that's giving developers, most of them very well-connected developers, very wealthy investors, free rein whether it benefits communities or not.

**1700**

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to run out of time here because I could start by going through some of the things that the government, in their four years in power already, has not done—or has done rather. Let's see, they cancelled rent control for countless renters, they cut homelessness programs, they repeatedly broke their promises that no tenant unable to pay the rent would lose their home during the pandemic, and instead they passed legislation to let landlords evict tenants faster. They ignored the advice of their own Housing Affordability Task Force and they just greenlit the biggest rent increase in a decade.

I want to tell you, before I run out of time, Speaker, that in my community, the issue of above-guideline rent increases—I have tenants in my office every week, many of them, who are experiencing 20% rent increases, 30% rent increases. They are facing renoviction, and they will never, despite all the—they will never be given another home. I know many, many people who have been forced

out of their home, and we help them. We try to help them, but the laws are just not there to support them. Many, many people in our communities rely on rent, and will continue to.

What I would love to see, and I'll just skip to that now, and again, I want to just say—I want to urge the government to work with us, to make amendments to this legislation in committee, to work with us to find real solutions, and to listen and to be open, because there's a lot missing here, that we could do so much better, if we took the time. We could actually bring in real rent control. We, as New Democrats, believe housing is a human right. We believe that everyone should be able to get a safe, affordable place of their own when they're ready, and we believe that people should be able to rent without the constant threat of eviction or bank-breaking rent hikes. And we believe that buying a home should not be out of reach, and that people and families should be able to afford to live in the community they love. I think that's not too much to ask, and I would ask the government to work with us to find solutions that don't impose on the city of Toronto and the people here more towers built of units that are unaffordable. Stop trying to turn our city into a place where only the very wealthy can live and start helping, working with us, for truly affordable housing solutions.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Questions?

**Mr. John Jordan:** This bill is very important to me, and it's not just about Ottawa and Toronto. Carleton Place is in my riding. Carleton Place is the fastest-growing community in Canada, not just Ontario—in Canada. This bill is designed to empower municipal leaders to work more effectively with the province to reduce timelines for development, standardize process and address local barriers. More housing is needed to address the affordability issue across the scope of housing, the spectrum of housing. Why would we not support a bill that supports building more houses and that would address affordability?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I want to thank the member from Lanark-Frontenac for his question. I would challenge the member to show me in this legislation anything that speaks to housing. I would challenge you to show me anything in here that actually—where does the word “housing” appear other than in the title?

And I would also challenge the member from Lanark-Frontenac to think about housing—it's not just really about how much housing you built, it's not really just about more housing on the market, it's about more affordable housing on the market, truly affordable housing. It's about solutions that may not work for you, but would work for other people, like more rent-gear-to-income, for example. My goodness, I can tell you what a difference that would make in the lives of the people I represent and in so many people across this province.

So I would say to the member opposite, I think that this—I will say again, I don't think that's what this bill is about at all. I think this is a bill about, under the guise of building housing, actually just simply giving the government more ability to impose their solutions on cities. And those solutions, I've got to tell you, so far have not worked.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you to the member from Davenport for your passionate presentation. As we've noted, this piece of legislation really is not about housing; this is about creating a strong mayor and centralizing power, as opposed to decentralizing power to the hands across all councillors and, of course, community members.

As you're aware, there are roughly 131,000 or so vacant homes in Toronto, and we know that, even during the pandemic, Airbnb short-term rentals have run amok while people are living outside of convenience stores. We know that there are rentals in some of the condos going for \$500 a night.

My question to you is, how is this bill, called Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, going to address the tangible need we have right now for real rent control, the tangible need to support folks who are being demovicted and renovicted out of our communities in Davenport and in St. Paul's? I don't think—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member to reply.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you very much to the member from Toronto–St. Paul's for her question. I will also say the member has done such an incredible job, actually, providing resources in your community, that we've all used in our communities to help ensure that renters, in particular tenants, have the tools and the information they need to really be able to push back and to know their rights. It's so important. Anyway, thank you for that.

I think that you make an excellent point. The short answer is there's nothing in this legislation that will bring in real rent control, that will ban renovictions, that will prevent these outrageous above-guideline increases, that is going to save the people. Two women I met the other day, both of them front-line health care workers, both of them living in apartments over storefronts on St. Clair, are both being renovicted by a landlord who has done this repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly. It will do nothing to help them.

So, to the member opposite, that why I'm really hoping the government will listen, change things up and actually introduce legislation that will help us to protect tenants.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Questions?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Congratulations to the member opposite for being re-elected as well.

I know the opposition has stood against a lot of our previous legislation as it pertains to building homes. The proof is in the pudding: Last year, Ontario had over 100,000 housing starts, the highest level since 1987, and more than 13,000 rental starts, which was the highest in 30 years. Now, I know the opposition was against the legislation we put through in the last Parliament that supported this. This legislation, I believe, will further enhance housing starts. Why does the opposition oppose putting through legislation that will make housing more affordable and more accessible to the people in the province of Ontario?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you very much to the member from Oakville for that question. I would say—and I feel like a bit of a broken record here—how can we oppose this legislation? Because it won't make housing more affordable. It does nothing to make housing more affordable. It doesn't even really do anything that will build more housing, frankly.

I was listening to CBC radio this morning, and I listened to the minister being interviewed about this legislation. The reporter repeatedly asked the minister, "Can you give me an example?"—he was being very friendly—"of where, in the case of the city of Toronto, city council has actually held up development?" The minister couldn't provide a single example—not a single example. Yet, I could tell you a few examples of things this government has held up. I'll share one with you: building schools. There are piles and piles of plans to build new schools and renovate schools on the Minister of Education's desk; nothing happening. Why don't you work on that?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, we have the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Thank you very much, Speaker, and I want to congratulate you on your re-election as Speaker. Glad to see you back.

1710

When this has been discussed, we've heard the word "affordability," we've heard the word "housing," but they're generally not put together, one after another. What I've heard a lot of was "market housing," and that's what is talked about.

As we're facing an affordability crisis and a housing crisis, there are many who are struggling to be able to afford a home at all, especially renters and others. But what my colleague so aptly and eloquently pointed out is that within this bill, other than the title, there is nothing about building new housing; it's about providing mayors, so long as they follow the ideology of this government, extraordinary powers to go through with it.

So for those who are fearful of seeing a mayor bring in privatization of public services or others under the guise of this act, do you believe those fears could be warranted?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Thank you to the member from Humber River–Black Creek. I know that the member has worked closely on the municipal side as well in the past and has some really excellent experience there, as do many of us. Many of us, as I mentioned, have worked at other levels of government and we've been elected at other levels of government, so this doesn't come out of nowhere.

I absolutely am deeply concerned. I think, really, the big concern here is that this gives mayors extraordinary powers to veto council decisions, for example. One of the great things about city government, I think, is that it works on consensus. There is consensus-building that happens. It is actually one of the things that I wish we did more of in this place. I think we would do better work, I think we would have better legislation, I think we would have better decision-making and we would serve the people of this province better if we did more of that.

And so I really am deeply concerned that a mayor could come in—and again, I used an example before of a councillor, but with a mayor as his brother at the time, trying to ram through some stuff that was basically going to give a particular wealthy developer free rein to build absolutely ridiculous things in the city of Toronto with no support from anybody else. We just simply can't let that kind of thing happen in any big city, especially a city like Toronto or Ottawa.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There's time for one very brief question.

**Mr. Rick Byers:** I thank the member for her comments. I understand the point she's making and others have made about what's the link between this bill and housing. The only thing I'd ask is that the recommendations for the bill, as folks know, came from the Housing Affordability Task Force, and the chair and vice-chair of that committee are both municipal leaders. Does that not provide the link between municipalities and housing? I'm curious about the member's views on that.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I thank the member for that. I have to say, my understanding is this is not really what they were asking for. Further than that, I would say there is very little in here that actually builds—well, there's nothing in here that actually, by the way, speaks to housing affordability or how you're going to get that done.

That's why, again—I'm just going to go back to it. I think that just because—and we've seen this happen in this House many times, right? Especially for folks who are new here, let me just fill you in on this. We've got legislation a lot of the times appearing here that has stuff in the title that has nothing to do with the bill. It's just to sell it. Well, it ain't selling it to us this time.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** It's an honour to join this debate in this House in regard to Bill 3, aptly named the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians know that we are in a housing crisis. Across the province, from my riding of Durham, to the Ottawa Valley, north to Sudbury and here in Toronto, we are hearing the same thing over and over again from thousands of our fellow citizens. Whether I've been talking to a young person, or a young couple looking to purchase their first home, or to parents, worried about their children leaving the nest and finding a place of their own that's attainable, or to seniors looking at downsizing their homes and finding that today's market looks nothing like it did when the homes were first purchased, Ontarians need more housing options.

My mother, Mary McCarthy, who will be 88 years old on December 11 of this year, was born Mary Switzer. She married my father, John Aloysius McCarthy, on November 16, 1957, at St. Brigid's Catholic Church here in Toronto. As newlyweds coming from middle-class families, born and raised in Toronto, they started their married life in a small rental unit on Victoria Park Avenue, and they voted Progressive Conservative in the 1958 federal election. Why, you may ask? Because to this day, my mother specifically recalls the campaign pledges on

housing attainability made by the then-new minority PC government of John Diefenbaker.

That government, endorsed by the Ontario PC government of Leslie Frost, promised my parents and their generation of young people and newcomers to Ontario and Canada at that time that it would address the housing slump and it would end the tight money policy that at that time remained the norm despite the creation of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. in 1954. That was the promised solution that was offered by a PC government, and it was a promise kept. And it worked, because like thousands of others of their generation, my parents were able to purchase their first home with a mortgage.

Cobbling together their own down payment, they did so two years later in 1960. They purchased a newly constructed strawberry box bungalow in Scarborough for \$16,000, because of a policy that wasn't called the housing act—it didn't necessarily specifically address building homes. It didn't tell people to build homes. It didn't give people money. But it created an environment which unleashed home building as the 1960s dawned, and the indirect effects of that was to contribute to prosperity and job creation and the dream of home ownership—again, for thousands of that generation who had been born and raised in Toronto, southern Ontario, and were given nothing for a down payment, and for newcomers who joined them at that time, who had the same opportunity. New neighbourhoods came to be, families were raised together, communities arose from that policy.

Now then, three decades later or so, when my wife, Kathy, and I bought our first home in Durham in 1989, with a 12% mortgage, I might add—and we thought we were getting a pretty good deal at that time. Some will remember the high interest rates of the early 1980s. So, in 1989, thinking back to 18% a few years earlier, 12% was pretty good.

But times have changed since then and since 1960, and so, certainly, has the housing market. Mortgage rates are now a third of what they used to be, looking back to the 1990s, but the average price of a house in Ontario has increased fivefold. And that's not all that's changing.

In the years since Kathy and I purchased our first home in Durham three decades ago, the population of Ontario has grown by five million people, and in the next 25 years, Ontario's population is expected or projected to grow by another five million. That's five million additional workers, entrepreneurs, members of families, who will make this great province their home. So we need to make sure there is enough housing supply to meet the demand. We know that up to 30% of this growth is expected to happen right here in Ontario's capital, Toronto, and its surrounding communities, and also in our nation's capital, in Ottawa and area. Toronto already accounts for roughly 20% of the total provincial population, and it continues to grow faster than the rest of the province.

**1720**

Ontario has a fine tradition of welcoming immigrants from across the globe—those who search for a new life, new opportunities and prosperity—and the reality is that of the over 100,000 people coming to Canada each year,

half settle in this great province of Ontario, with most of the newcomers calling Toronto or the greater Toronto area their new home. The city of Toronto has always warmly accepted and welcomed the population of new Canadians with open arms, celebrating our diverse cultures and backgrounds and sharing in our common denominators, such as our love of Canada and a desire to work, provide for our families and contribute to our communities.

In order to continue this tradition, we do need to keep pace with these increasing demands on our housing market. That is why this government is committed to building 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. That means getting shovels in the ground, getting homes built, getting it done, starting now. That means 150,000 detached homes, townhomes, condominiums and rental units every year, for each of the next 10 years.

I want to congratulate my colleague the honourable member from Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes on his exemplary work that he has done thus far as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and thank him for the work he continues to do for our province. Last year in Ontario, we saw 100,000 new housing starts—that's in 2021—and 100,000 homes for Ontarians being built right now as a result. That is the most housing starts in over 30 years, so I think we can agree, Mr. Speaker, that this is quite an achievement, quite a start. But of course we aren't stopping there; that is why we have Bill 3 and the proposals for the reforms that will have the ripple effect of building homes.

Last spring, the Housing Supply Task Force put forward a series of targets and recommendations that have informed and guided this bill. The HSTF recommended that in order to lower the cost of homes in the province's most populous areas and the fastest-growing cities—that's Toronto and Ottawa—we must build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. We can do it and we will do it, but we need to do it with the partnership and co-operation of our municipalities. This is a how-to bill. That's why stronger mayoral powers are connected to building homes.

Why do we know that, Mr. Speaker? Because we know that supply is one of the most significant factors affecting the housing market right now. Toronto is growing. Ottawa is growing. People are moving into this city and into the Ottawa area, so the demand for houses of all types—again, detached townhomes, condominiums, rental units—is high. When demand is high and we lack the supply to meet that demand, as we do, we find ourselves in the situation we are in today. Demand is high, and so prices are high, and people are struggling to find housing solutions that fit both their lives and their pocketbooks.

Should workers in Toronto be forced to choose between moving two hours outside the city, spending money on gas and transit, and missing out on precious time with their loved ones; or spending more than they could afford, becoming house-poor, in order to live in the city and closer to their workplaces? Should families in Ottawa that have lived there for generations have to move away, either out of Ottawa or across the river and out of the province, in order to keep the family together?

Mr. Speaker, I think we all know the answers to these questions, and that's what this bill will address, because "no" should not be the answer. We will instead, with this bill, if passed, say yes to more homes in urban centres where growth is most extreme, where we can and will combat the rising house prices across the province and help Ontarians to purchase homes in big cities. Otherwise, when people from Toronto and Ottawa cannot find a place to live within the city, they find themselves moving out into suburban areas. Then that drives up demand in those areas, resulting in higher housing prices across the province.

This is an issue that I, too, understand from a personal perspective. I, too, understand the realities for my own family. My children, now adults themselves, struggle to find a place to call their own. My daughter rents an apartment but dreams of a home to call her own one day. But the current housing market makes her feel as though that dream is constantly out of reach. My eldest son still lives at home. Though my wife, Kathy, and I love to have him nearby, of course, it's every parent's wish to see him succeed, to see him spread his wings and find his own place and leave the nest.

That is why I am so proud to support Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act. When one looks at it in the big picture context, consider what the jurisdiction of this Legislative Assembly is. For 155 years, the formerly named British North America Act—now the Constitution Act, 1867—has exclusive powers for both the federal and provincial levels of government. The exclusive powers of provincial Legislatures are set out in section 92. There were 16 and now there are 15 specific matters coming within the classes of subjects within the jurisdiction of this provincial Legislature. They include, among other things, municipal institutions in the province, property and civil rights in the province, and generally all matters of a more local nature in the province.

This bill is legislation in respect of municipal institutions in the province, but also—to the extent that it is about the purpose of creating an environment for the building of more homes, to unleash the potential to build 1.5 million homes—it is, too, about property and civil rights in the province.

Mayors of Toronto and Ottawa require the tools to move forward with provincial priorities, selecting municipal heads and delivering budgets. These proposed tools would reduce timelines for development. They would standardize processes and address local barriers. The current housing crisis will only get worse without this kind of bold action.

This bill, if passed, will assist municipalities in breaking through logjams that have, for far too long, slowed the speed of much-needed housing construction. We will cut through red tape that, for far too long, has been slowing down progress at the municipal level in the places where we need it most. Toronto and Ottawa are these major metropolitan areas. They've seen massive growth in the last two decades and are expected to continue to be some

of the busiest and most populous areas—not just comparing them to other areas of Ontario, but also comparing them to the rest of Canada.

We need action from our municipalities on housing. This bill will strengthen the power of Toronto and Ottawa mayors to move forward provincial priorities and will empower local elected officials to take the decisive action necessary on the housing crisis. The 1.5 million new homes in Ontario is just one of this government's provincial priorities, and we are giving mayors the tools they need to get it done.

Ontarians trust their local officials—I think we can all agree on that—and we, in this government, trust Ontarians to elect the right leaders. But think of this reality: The current mayor of Toronto, John Tory, received nearly half a million votes in the 2018 election. Nearly half a million people in Toronto placed their trust and their city in his hands. Conversely, the Toronto city councillor who received the most votes in 2018 received only 5%—or 26,000—of that figure.

#### 1730

What this bill proposes to do is to demand more of our mayors in Toronto and Ottawa—more action, but with accountability, with the checks and balances. By strengthening mayoral powers and cutting the red tape that gets in their way, municipalities will be able to flourish and grow to meet the rising housing needs.

Toronto is ready to build. The city is ready to put shovels in the ground, ready to take action. It just needs the mayoral tools to do that.

So the act provides, in essence, a new approach to municipal governance in Ottawa and Toronto—and as indicated by others who've spoken on this bill, it is checks and balances. It's consistent with the notion that when the mayor can propose a matter for a meeting or veto a bylaw that the mayor believes would be contrary to provincial priorities, or propose a budget measure that then could be amended by council, it's a conversation between mayor and council, all of whom are elected by the citizenry. But it's the mayor who has the city-wide mandate. It makes sense, therefore, to balance, as this bill does, or proposes to do, to allow a mayor to move forward with provincial priorities and at the same time balance that with the override powers of a substantial majority of elected council members—a two-thirds majority. That's the conversation. So this is not a mayor who can have complete control without consequences. The act proposes to amend the City of Toronto Act, the Municipal Act and the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act that governs the conduct of all members of council, including mayors. But also, it's that conversation, whereby that two-thirds override is available—a substantial majority of council, which better reflects the citizenry. At least two thirds of council—it's not the same mandate, even to that level, that a mayor has received, which is city-wide, but it's far more a reflection of the will of the people than a simple majority. That's the idea behind that check and balance. That's the idea behind that conversation. That's how the act works. In the end, this empowered mayoral decision to move

forward with provincial priorities is still potentially subject to being overridden by a two-thirds substantial majority of council.

The new housing supply action plan implementation team is chaired by Drew Dilkens, the mayor of Windsor, and of course, the vice-chair, Cheryl Fort, mayor of the township of Hornepayne. These experts will move forward on this recommendation.

So what we have with this bill, like our historical counterparts in previous PC governments, is creating an environment that makes positive change, that makes housing attainable, that creates the environment for the home ownership dream. In the end, what this bill reflects is a government that has listened, and like its predecessors, understands and acts based on what it has listened to, to create the environment for building Ontario and Canada, prosperity for all and opportunity for all.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Questions for the member for Durham? I recognize the member for University–Rosedale.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Durham for your presentation.

I read here that the regional chair for the Durham region, John Henry, said he is not looking for the enhanced strong-mayor powers that his counterparts in Toronto and Ottawa are set to receive from the province.

Would you personally support strong-mayor powers in your region without the approval of city council—as in, your regional chair?

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

This bill addresses the two most populous cities—

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I'm interested in your region.

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** Yes. This bill addresses and is targeted to Toronto and Ottawa. That's what I'm addressing today.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Perth–Wellington.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** [*Inaudible*] to the people of Perth–Wellington for electing me. It's a great honour to serve you.

Through you, Speaker, to my honourable colleague from Durham: We come from two growing parts of Ontario. Partly because of Toronto not building enough affordable housing, people are moving out to find those units they can buy—the townhouses, the semis—in our communities. So I'd like my honourable member to address how this bill will help alleviate some of those pressures locally in our ridings.

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** Thank you to my colleague.

Well, of course, my riding, Durham, is within Durham region, as the member for the NDP pointed out. I addressed it in my remarks, and I'll just repeat: Because this is targeted to the two biggest and fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario and indeed Canada, this then has that ripple effect. When you put in place this bill, what you have is a recipe for prosperity and opportunity for all, job creation for skilled workers, the ripple effect of that. Also, if you don't take bold action, as this bill proposes to do,

you end up creating higher prices and less supply, a ripple effect as people move out of the city and come to the member opposite's area and my area. That drives up prices and creates problems. So by addressing this housing crisis in the two largest urban centres, it has an indirect positive effect on attainability and supply in your riding and in mine.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, we have the member for Humber River–Black Creek.

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** Thank you for your presentation, and congratulations on your election.

Listening to the presentations I've heard today, it would appear that the mayor of the city of Toronto must lose most of the votes, must be on the losing side of all the votes that come out there, because this government is considering bringing in extraordinary powers to ensure that the mayor votes when that mayor needs to.

I would assume, with a majority government, huge amounts of resources and an army of staff at your disposal, you will have done your homework. So could you tell me how often the mayor of the city of Toronto must be losing votes for you to bring in these unprecedented powers for the city of Toronto?

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** Mr. Speaker, the question reminds me of a comment made by a member opposite in one of the unrecognized parties, the comment that a mayor can and must be a good politician—and we have a few former mayors in this House. I think that's true. I would submit that, because of the checks and balances in this act, where a two-thirds majority of council could override the additional powers to set the agenda of a mayor in Toronto or Ottawa, that mayor still has to be as good a politician as ever, because there are conversations that must occur between members of council and the mayor on the provincial priorities. That's what this does. And one of those most important conversations will be, how do we address the logjams that are getting in the way of attainable housing and getting shovels in the ground? That conversation could now happen if this bill is passed in the context of the two-thirds override further to the strong-mayor powers.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next, we have Mississauga–Malton.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** First of all, I would like to congratulate the member from Durham for your election and your appointments as the parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board and deputy government whip.

Mr. Speaker, I landed at Pearson airport on January 15, 2000. I got my first job on January 20; first permanent job on February 9. Together, my wife and I were able to realize the dream of buying our first home in 2001.

Fast-forward to 2022: We are in a current housing crisis.

To the member from Durham: What is your message to the new immigrants—like your parents in the 1950s, like me in 2000—and for my daughter, like yours, looking to realize their dream of home ownership?

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**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** Thank you to my colleague.

My message is simply this—and the message isn't from me; it's from this bill, that I hope and believe this House can and will support along with me: Welcome to Ontario. Welcome to Canada. That is our tradition. That is what makes our province and our country great.

Just as my parents were among citizens and newcomers who benefited from a PC policy, supported by a former PC government, this new generation of newcomers and new immigrants will have opportunity. When I say this bill provides opportunity for all, I mean citizens who have been waiting a long time while here to purchase their first home and newcomers who have not yet even arrived here in Ontario. We welcome all. This bill, if passed, will benefit newcomers and those who have been here waiting for years or decades to make that first purchase.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Davenport.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I was listening very carefully to the member from Durham's comments and also responses to some of the—or rather, failure to respond to some of the questions on this side.

One of the questions was about how many votes this current mayor of Toronto has lost, because it must be a big concern to the members opposite. There was a reference to doing away with logjams, and here's the mayor—by the way, Mayor Tory would probably be very keen to know himself why they're so deeply worried about his obvious failure as he's heading into this city council election.

Anyway, my question is, could the member from Durham give me just one example of a decision that the city of Toronto made counter to the mayor—a vote the mayor has lost—that somehow would have resulted in more housing? I'm sure with all the resources you guys have now, with your parliamentary assistant roles and ministerial appointments, there must be lots of staff who can help you out with that one.

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** I'm newer here than the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, but as a lawyer and a student of history, I know that this place is here because we are a nation and a province of laws, not people. We don't legislate specific to people's personal experience. We don't say, "Well, how many votes did this mayor want?" We don't say, "Well, the outgoing mayor of Ottawa doesn't want this, but the current mayor, who is running for re-election, may want this." That's not how we legislate.

What this House does is, within the jurisdiction granted to it by the founders of our nation—specific enumerated powers under section 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867—within the exclusive jurisdiction of this assembly, laws are passed based on those enumerated heads and—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** If I could be heard, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** So the question that I'm answering is answered in this way. It calls for me to

answer it in such a way that we would legislate contrary to the principles of the rule of law. So the question, in my respectful submission, is out of order. This bill legislates in accordance with the jurisdiction of this assembly under the Constitution Act of 1867—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Davenport will please come to order.

I think we're going to ask for further debate.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** It is a pleasure to rise today to join the debate on this bill, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.

This is my first opportunity to participate in debate since the election, so I would like to offer my congratulations to all of the members who have joined this chamber and those who have been re-elected.

I also want to offer my congratulations to you, Speaker, for assuming your place in that very important chair.

I have to say, when I saw the title of this act, I thought there is nothing that Ontario needs right now more than homes. We are in the midst of a housing crisis of proportions that we haven't seen before. We are in the midst of a homelessness crisis that is devastating our communities.

In London, we have had 167 deaths of people who have experienced homelessness over the last three years—deaths that were preventable. If the proper supports were in place; if access to decent, safe, supportive housing was available; if mental health supports were available; if the proper supports for addiction were available, these deaths could have been prevented.

So, Speaker, we would welcome legislation that actually contributes to building homes.

But the problem with this bill is that it somehow suggests that if you give stronger powers to the mayors of municipalities like Toronto and Ottawa, then all of a sudden you're going to have homes built, and what we have heard today throughout this debate, what we have heard in the media from the reaction of municipal councillors to this bill, is that this bill will do nothing to actually increase housing supply—affordable housing supply, deeply affordable housing supply, which is really what we're most lacking in this province. This bill won't address those issues. This bill really is a distraction from what we really need to do to address the housing crisis in Ontario.

My colleague the member for Niagara, in his lead, commented that it feels a little bit like déjà vu. Here we are, on the eve of an election, gathered in this place for an unusual, unique summer session of the Legislature, and we're dealing with legislation that once again meddles in the municipal affairs of two specific local councils this time: Toronto and Ottawa.

I have to say, as the representative of a community, London West, we have also experienced the impact of this Premier's obsession with meddling in local issues, his obsession with undermining local democracy. We saw that in legislation that the last government, under this Premier, brought forward to arbitrarily eliminate ranked-ballot

voting in my community. Ranked-ballot voting in London was an initiative that was put in place in the last municipal election, and it was highly successful. There was an evaluation done of ranked-ballot voting that talked about how the voters appreciated the opportunity to be able to rank their local candidates. Candidates appreciated the opportunity to be able to run and have a fairer shot at being elected—because there wasn't the advantage to incumbency; that advantage wasn't as significant with a ranked-ballot process. So this was an electoral process that was working. But for some reason, this Premier decided that no municipality was going to be able to conduct their municipal elections using a ranked-ballot vote under his watch. In fact, it cost the city of London \$50,000, because they had to remove all of the infrastructure that they had put in place to conduct that ranked-ballot election in 2018.

So we have numerous examples of this government undermining local democracy, and this is yet another example of a Premier who wants to meddle in municipal affairs.

I can tell you, Speaker, that municipalities would welcome action from this government to partner with them, to help address some of these deep challenges that municipalities are experiencing.

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I'm going to spend a little bit of time talking about housing, because this bill claims to have building homes as a focus. There's nothing in the bill that actually will help build homes, but homes are something we really, really need in this province and in my community of London.

London got some provincial attention once again, perhaps national attention, because of what our community just went through within the last couple of weeks. A coalition formed called the Forgotten 519, which was a coming-together of 200 and more front-line service providers who work for agencies that support people who are experiencing homelessness. They came together to shine a spotlight on some of the inadequacies of the municipal government's response, the city of London's response, to dealing with homelessness. They had some very specific demands that they wanted to call the city's attention to and get some immediate action on. One of them was the city's policies in dealing with encampments. Another was to ensure that the appropriate supports were in place for the coordinated informed response team, which is the city's unit that deals with encampments and people who are experiencing homelessness. The third was a demand that two 24/7 indoor spaces be established to support people who are experiencing homelessness who need a safe place to shower, a safe place to store their belongings, a safe place for any number of reasons. In order to achieve their demands, one of the front-line service workers who was involved with the Forgotten 519 held a hunger strike on the steps of city hall.

The support that was mobilized throughout the community for the efforts of the Forgotten 519 really shows the recognition of Londoners that we do not want to see our fellow citizens homeless on the street. We do not want to see 176 deaths of people who are experiencing

homelessness—deaths that could have been prevented if the proper supports were in place.

I had a conversation with the doctor who was the spokesperson for the Forgotten 519, Dr. Sereda, and she really wanted to emphasize that when they were pushing for a change in policy in terms of the city's approach to encampments, it was very much not that they thought encampments are the solution to people experiencing homelessness. They recognize that encampments are something the city is dealing with now, and will be dealing with for a while, until we get a provincial partner who is willing to work with municipalities and get those supportive housing units in place, get those affordable housing units in place that are needed to move people from homelessness into housing.

In the aftermath of the hunger strike of the Forgotten 519—which was resolved successfully, I would like to share, over four days—there was a bringing-together of all of the agencies, representatives of all those agencies and representatives of the city, and they came to a series of agreements on how they were going to move forward together. One of those things that they agreed on was to really advocate to the province to come to the table, to work with cities like London to help address the homelessness crisis and issues around lack of affordable housing.

Shortly after the hunger strike ended and this agreement was worked out, the Unity Project—which is a well-established London agency for relief of homelessness—issued a very interesting open letter in which they described their experience going before the Ontario Land Tribunal as they were appealing a development that was being built in the proximity of the Unity Project homeless shelter. That development was a 243-unit high-rise that was being built downtown. Thirteen of the units in that high-rise were being designated as affordable—80% of average market rent. We know that the reality is that 80% of average market rent may be affordable for some people, but for many of the people who are struggling the most in our communities, 80% of average market rent is a dream. It still does not make access to safe and affordable housing a reality for people who are some of the lowest-income in our communities. The fact that only 13 of those units were designated as affordable was a real issue for the Unity Project homeless shelter. They were pushing for a quarter of those units to be below market rent and to be much lower than that 80%.

One of the comments from the open letter that the Unity Project issued that talked about their experience with the appeal—which they lost, by the way. One of the comments they made was, "Building more and more unaffordable housing does not solve the housing crisis in our growing city; it perpetuates it." Speaker, I think that is something we really have to keep in mind.

Of course, this legislation, as I said at the outset, really does nothing to build homes. It really does nothing to address the housing crisis. We have not heard from this government any kind of explanation as to how giving

mayors stronger powers is actually going to contribute to building homes.

But if we do see something from this government that does address the housing crisis that Ontarians are experiencing, we have to remember that the crisis really is in affordability. It is people's lack of financial means in order to be able to pay the market rents that are the reality for Ontarians at this time.

I want to read some emails I got recently from constituents.

Here's a London West constituent who says, "In May 2022, my landlord sold the triplex I live in. Yesterday, the new owner served my partner and I with an N12, stating that he intends to move in and wants us out by September 30. We have 60 days to find a home during one of the worst housing crises in our lifetime. We currently pay \$1,050 for a three-bedroom apartment. Most two-bedroom apartments in the areas we are looking at are between \$1,600 and \$2,200. We simply can't afford these prices. I

have a full-time job, but my partner doesn't make much money as a front-line health care worker."

This is a two-income family who are feeling that they are at the end of their rope because they have been told that they have to vacate the unit that they've been living in, and there are no other options. There are no other options for families like this.

I have another email from a constituent, who writes, "I'm writing this as a desperate plea of a 32-year-old single-income woman"—and she had the experience where she rented an apartment that was built post-2018 and just got hit with an 8% increase—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, August 17, at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*







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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

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