

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

HE-3

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

HE-3

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

Strong Mayors,  
Building Homes Act, 2022

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Thursday 25 August 2022

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

Loi de 2022 pour  
des maires forts et pour  
la construction de logements

1<sup>re</sup> session  
43<sup>e</sup> législature

Jeudi 25 août 2022

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Chair: Laurie Scott  
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott  
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Thursday 25 August 2022

Jeudi 25 août 2022

*The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.*

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

Consideration 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 Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to conduct public hearings on Bill 3, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to special powers and duties of heads of council. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

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

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER  
AND RESPONSES**

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Presenting this morning is the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Steve Clark. Welcome. You will have 20 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 40 minutes for questions and answers, divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members, and two rounds of five minutes for the independent member. Are there any questions?

You will have 20 minutes for your presentation, and you may begin.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Good morning, everyone. It's a great honour for me to present before the heritage, infrastructure and cultural policy committee with important details about our government's proposed Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.

Ontario has a housing supply crisis. There are far more hard-working Ontarians looking for homes than there are homes available. Our government, under the leadership of

Premier Ford, is taking action to address the supply crisis head-on. It's with great pride that we offered ourselves to Ontarians with a plan to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years.

One of the actions that our government took to address the crisis was to create a Housing Affordability Task Force comprised of industry leaders and experts. The task force completed its report to the government in February of this year, and in their report, they recommended additional measures to increase the supply of market housing. They highlighted that the supply problem goes years back and that any efforts to cool the housing market have only provided temporary relief for homebuyers. They said that we have to think long-term, as housing prices are increasing much faster than Ontarians' incomes, and the time for action is now.

The task force also pointed out, after meeting with a variety of housing sector partners, that they heard solutions that really fit into five themes. Two of those themes stand out for the purposes of our discussion today. They are: ending exclusionary municipal rules that block and delay new housing, and depoliticizing the housing approvals process. As the task force pointed out, there is a bottleneck when it comes to getting shovels in the ground for new home construction. Development and zoning approvals are often delayed or hindered because of opposition from some members of local municipal councils. Some projects are even abandoned. And even if a project finally gets the go-ahead, a tremendous amount of damage has been done.

We used some of the task force's recommendations to inform our More Homes for Everyone plan, which is our government's plan to build more housing faster.

The task force report is our long-term housing road map. We will work with our partners to develop a new housing supply action plan every year, over four years, to implement the task force's recommendations and deliver real, long-term solutions.

That's why we've established the Housing Supply Action Plan Implementation Team. The team will be chaired by Drew Dilkens, the mayor of Windsor, and vice-chaired by Cheryl Fort, the mayor of the township of Hornepayne. Both Mayor Dilkens and Mayor Fort were appointed by our government for their valuable knowledge and their leadership skills, but also to ensure that our municipal partners have a strong role in deciding how to

best implement the housing supply action plan. The team will provide advice on market housing initiatives, including building on the vision from the task force, building on the vision from our More Homes for Everyone plan and our government consultations.

Of course, members of the committee, housing experts across the country are weighing in on the housing crisis.

The C.D. Howe Institute found that restrictions and extra costs on building new housing have dramatically increased the price of housing developments. These restrictions include delays on project and permitting approvals. The institute calculated that these barriers add approximately \$168,000 or 22% to the average cost of a single detached home in Toronto.

What's more, the Ontario Association of Architects concluded that for a 100-unit condominium building in Toronto, delayed approvals cost home builders almost \$2,000 per unit per month. These are significant costs that will be ultimately passed on to homebuyers and to renters.

The challenge that we have is that local planning processes have become politicized, even the technical planning decisions.

According to the World Bank—I know some of you have heard me quote this before—Canada ranks 34th out of 35 OECD member countries for the length of time it takes to obtain all the approvals for a building permit. Just how long do these approvals take? Well, according to the Building Industry and Land Development Association of the greater Toronto area, it takes municipalities in the greater Golden Horseshoe from 12 to 30 months to review a site plan. The association also found it takes between nine and 25 months to approve a zoning bylaw amendment. These unnecessary delays drive up the cost of housing.

We need to get housing built faster, and we need to take the politics out of planning.

Just this month, the Smart Prosperity Institute at the University of Ottawa released a report entitled Ontario's Need for 1.5 Million More Homes. The report first asks if Ontario really needs 1.5 million homes. The answer to the question—I think you all know what the answer is—is unequivocally a yes. To reach the answer, though, the institute developed a rest-of-Canada average benchmark method. It looked at how many new homes would need to be built in Ontario's 49 census divisions to bring housing supply up to the average of the rest of Canada by 2031. It's no surprise that Toronto will have the largest demand for population growth.

The report goes on to confirm that Ontario is already grappling with a shortage of almost 500,000 homes. That's on top of the half a million homes; Ontario will need another one million homes by 2031 to satisfy forecasted demand created by our own growing population. In total, therefore, we need to build 1.5 million new homes in the next decade if we are going to fix the housing supply crisis.

The report goes on to say that Ontario needs a comprehensive plan to address the bottlenecks that will limit housing construction over the next decade. I want to assure members of this committee that we're committed

as a government to providing that plan. We know we need to do everything we can to ensure that new homes reach the shovel-ready stage of construction faster. A good first step would be to tackle the political logjam of getting approvals.

As the Housing Affordability Task Force found in its consultation, stakeholders agree with us that ending exclusionary municipal rules and depoliticizing the housing approvals process are good first steps. That's why our government proposed the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act. The proposed act and the associated regulations would amend the City of Toronto Act, the Municipal Act and the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act. It would provide the mayors of Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario's two largest cities, with additional governance tools, as well as increased powers to align municipal decision-making with provincial priorities, and at the top of the list of priorities is housing.

When discussions about this legislation began, we heard from Toronto's mayor, John Tory. He said he has and continues to support the use of a strong-mayor system, and he noted the link to getting housing built faster.

I would now like to go into a little more detail about some of the governance tools that are being proposed in this bill.

The proposed changes would give the mayors of Toronto and Ottawa the power to appoint a chief administrative officer of the municipality—as well as the hiring and firing of its department heads. The bill would enable the two mayors to create and reorganize departments. These mayors would be able to appoint the chairs and the vice-chairs of committees and local boards that are identified in regulation. They would be able to establish those committees. In addition, they would have the power to direct matters of provincial priority for council consideration. They would be able to direct staff to prepare proposals on these matters.

Perhaps most importantly, the mayors would have the power to develop their municipality's budget and then table it for council consideration and for council input. In turn, council would be able to make amendments to the budget. These amendments would be subject to a mayor's veto.

#### **0910**

At the same time, the proposed changes in this bill would make these mayors more personally accountable, to give them veto power over bylaws passed by council, if in the mayor's opinion the bylaw would interfere with a provincial priority. The council would still be able to override a mayoral veto by a two-thirds majority vote.

The proposed changes would require that these mayors also declare financial interests related to their new powers. The mayors would be prevented from using these new powers when certain financial conflicts exist.

There are times, as well, when we'll find that the mayor's seat might become vacant before the next regular election. Our bill, if passed, would also require that a by-election be held to replace a mayor who holds these powers if that is the case. Currently, as I think most of you

know, municipal councils have the choice of holding a by-election or appointing a new mayor. I'd like to note that this would not change the existing rules of a by-election.

I also want to emphasize again that all of the powers, all of the rules that I've mentioned so far are intended to apply to Toronto and Ottawa. Aside from being our province's two largest municipalities, they were chosen because over one third of the growth in our province over the next 10 years is forecasted to take place in those two cities, so it's very important that we give those mayors the tools they need to do the job. However, the proposed changes would give the minister the regulatory authority to designate other municipalities where these powers could apply. These would be municipalities that are shovel-ready, committed to growth and committed to cutting red tape.

On the subject of provincial priorities: The most important priority that we can instill in these mayors is that our government committed to the people of Ontario that we would build those 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. We intend, if the legislation is passed, that this provincial priority could be set out in regulation. We also intend to enshrine other provincial priorities in regulation that would concern the construction and maintenance of critical infrastructure to support the accelerated supply and availability of housing, and this could include but is not limited to transit, roads and utilities. It all works together.

I'd now like to talk briefly about the timing of the government's legislation. We need to move quickly to address the housing supply crisis. Our goal is that the proposed changes would be in place before the new term of council begins in mid-November so that the mayors of Toronto and Ottawa can hit the ground running. Again, I want to stress that our government is always open to, at a later date, assessing opportunities to extend these powers to other growing municipalities where housing is needed.

As I've said, we can't wait any longer for these proposed new powers for the mayors of Toronto and Ottawa. Passage of this proposed legislation would further empower the newly elected mayors when they begin their new term of office. It would give them more opportunity to help achieve our shared municipal-provincial priorities. If passed, this legislation would allow us to work more effectively with our municipal partners as we move toward our shared goal of helping families reach the dream of attainable home ownership.

I'll say it again: There simply aren't enough homes for families who want to call Ontario home. We need to boost housing supply in the province. We need our municipal partners to get housing projects approved quicker. By empowering mayors to take responsibility in their communities, they can help us do that.

The idea of strong mayors is not a new concept. It's not the first time that it has been raised in our province, nor is it an untried idea. In fact, strong-mayor systems work very well in other jurisdictions—cities like Chicago, London, Los Angeles, Paris. A strong-mayor system helps local governments deliver those local services and priorities for their communities. The mayors in these cities have

strengthened roles and additional administrative and executive powers in developing budgets, and some have the opportunity to veto in certain situations. These strong-mayor systems support the needs of their growing communities, just as strong-mayor systems can support the needs of growing communities in Toronto and Ottawa.

In conclusion, Chair, you can see that our proposed legislation would not introduce something that is new or untried. And frankly, it's something we can't afford to wait another minute for. We need to act on our promise to make more housing built in the province of Ontario faster. While our government is well aware that there is no silver bullet in addressing the housing crisis, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act is a very important step in the right direction. The legislation is a critical tool to get more homes built faster and is one of a number of initiatives that our government is taking to address the housing shortage. Ontario is committed to supporting municipalities. We remain focused on improving planning policies and cutting red tape to get more homes built faster. The government is also leading by example and encourages other government partners to join us in making and taking concrete steps so that all Ontarians find a home that meets their needs and their budget. The Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act would provide more tools to municipal leaders to deliver on their platform commitments to constituents. Working with our municipal partners, we want to be able to reach our goal of 1.5 million homes in Ontario over the next 10 years.

Thank you for your patience. I hope I was close to time. I'd be pleased to answer questions. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I really appreciate it.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much, Minister, for your presentation.

We are going to start the rounds of questions. We're going to start with the official opposition, so MPP Burch, if you want to commence—and again, it's seven and a half minutes that you have for this round.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Good morning, Minister.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Good morning.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Minister, you're very familiar with our party's position on this bill, through our conversations in the Legislature. We have said that this is, once again, the Premier demonstrating disdain for local democracy by interfering in municipal politics during a municipal election, with no consultation—and I'm going to come back to the consultation point. The Premier has proposed this, which has nothing to do with housing, as the Premier himself actually admitted; it's about the Premier giving mayors the power to help him bypass councils and override local bylaws and stifle consultation. And the bill will actually make local governments less transparent, less accountable, while doing nothing to address affordable housing—and I'll come back to that part later.

I want to focus my question on the consultation part. During the entire last term of government, this was never discussed once. There have been two major housing bills in the last term. Neither one of the housing bills addressed this at any point. There was a housing task force that you

referred to. This was not discussed specifically at any point during that time. It was not brought up during the election at all. It was not brought up with the big city mayors. And I think a lot of people were surprised at AMO, recently, to hear the mayor of Ottawa say that he found out about it from the media.

Do you think it's responsible of a government to bring forward a piece of legislation with virtually no consultation? Isn't it kind of ironic that we're talking about an issue of governance, yet the government itself has not really shown best practices in governance by failing to consult with anyone before bringing the bill forward?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Well, I disagree with your comments, MPP Burch. The Premier has been on record many, many times indicating his feeling about providing stronger powers, indicating that mayors deserve stronger powers. It has been well known. This is not a new concept. I remember the Premier standing in the city that I was mayor of in 2018, before he became the Premier, talking about the subject. I remember he also talked about the subject in the city of Cornwall earlier that morning. It's not something that's new. I found out about the strong-mayor system 40 years ago, a month after I was elected mayor of Brockville. So this isn't something that hasn't been discussed. Mayor Miller, when he was mayor of Toronto, talked about this extensively with the government of the day.

**0920**

I want to focus on a meeting that Premier Ford and I had with Ontario's Big City Mayors and regional chairs in January, where we indicated to them that municipalities needed to break the logjam of the development approval process. Do you know what they indicated to the Premier and me? They said, "This isn't just our problem to fix. You need to give us the tools to help us implement these priorities." That's exactly what this bill is doing.

What we're here for today, with my testimony before the standing committee, is, we're kicking off an additional round of consultation. We've consulted with Ontarians through our Housing Affordability Task Force. We continue to consult on both of our housing supply action plans. Bill 108, More Homes, More Choice Act, had extensive consultations around the province. The More Homes for Everyone Act was a direct result of the consultation.

Check some of the postings. We're consulting on multi-generational communities. We're consulting on a rural housing—consultations "R" us. We continuously ask Ontarians and ask our partners. The day that we put forward this bill, I emailed every head of council in the province asking for their feedback on this proposal. Some of them might very well testify at committee—

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** So you asked for their feedback the day that you proposed the bill? Don't you ask for feedback before you put a bill—

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Well, we did; I just said. We had a very lively meeting—the Premier and I—with Ontario's Big City Mayors and regional chairs.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Big city mayors said they were surprised by it.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** No, MPP Burch, they clearly said to us at that time that they need the tools to help us get the job done. So this is one tool.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** The mayor of Ottawa says he found out about it in the media.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I wish Mayor Watson well.

We wanted to put in place this bill prior to the election to let all the municipal candidates for mayor know, in Toronto and Ottawa, that this is a priority for us. We've got one third of the growth in Ontario over the next decade in those two cities. We have to ensure that those new mayors, when they begin the new term of office in mid-November—this legislation, if it passes, and the associated regulations have to be in place for the start of that term. It's critical, and providing this tool and many others is something we're going to continue to work on.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** So you've talked about how the powers are in the bill to expand it to other municipalities in the future.

Staying on the question of consultation, we're starting to hear from mayors all over Ontario, and many of them are saying—big city mayors especially—that they have not been consulted and that they're not in favour of it.

In my own region, in Niagara, the three major cities—Walter Sendzik in St. Catharines, Mayor Diodati in Niagara Falls, Mayor Campion in Welland, all different political stripes, and the chair of the region, Jim Bradley—all have come out with comments opposed to the legislation, and their comments have to do with the fact that they don't understand the connection to housing—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** One minute left.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** —but also that it's not something that is useful to a council in terms of passing legislation because, really, the political power that a mayor has has to do with working with their council. This bill has to do with the mayor being able to veto council and then council being able to veto the mayor. They feel that it creates divisions. That's something that would have come out if the bill was properly consulted.

Can you comment on why mayors are not falling in line?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I have 444 municipalities, MPP Burch. At any given time, I'm going to have mayors who are going to support an initiative or an idea and mayors who don't.

We're going to continue to consult with our municipal partners on other priorities, but I have to make sure, given the amount of growth that's going to be in Toronto and Ottawa over the next 10 years, that I get it right for those two municipalities first. I'm pleased to continue the conversation.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you, Minister. That time is up.

We'll now move on for five minutes to MPP McMahon.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good morning, everyone. It's great to be here. And it's great to meet you, Minister Clark.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** It's great to meet you too.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Absolutely, we're in a housing crisis. We all know that. It has been going on for quite some time now, and we need to absolutely get shovels in the ground and address it.

I have some concerns with this bill. I guess my first question would be—it's the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, all about housing. So what would your definition of a home be? Would it be townhomes, co-op housing, affordable rental, triplexes, duplexes, laneway suites? Or are we just focusing on single-family detached homes, which we know will not solve the crisis?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** That's a great question.

When we first created the housing supply action plan in 2019, we were very clear that because of the amount of housing units that we need, we need all types, all shapes, all sizes. A home means something different for every Ontarian.

Regardless of the fact that last year we had the best year in 30 years, when we had 100,000 starts—everyone in this committee can do the math: 100,000 starts times 10 isn't going to get us to the 1.5 million homes. So we need housing of all types. We need family-size condos. We need purpose-built rentals. We need homes that have different price ranges for different people. And it came out during the election—and you listen to the leadership of Premier Ford—we need all types. So the housing supply action plan, More Homes for Everyone, and our plan really fits that narrative that you just mentioned by providing a wide variety of housing options.

I think the strongest piece within this bill is the fact that the mayor directs the budget. You, as a former municipal councillor, understand the fact that the budget is critical for putting that plan in place to be able to get shovels in the ground faster—and when I say shovels in the ground, it's for everything. We need all types across this province.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** We're talking about political will, and we're assuming that these mayors, if we give them the power, would be pro-housing. In my experience, municipally, right across Ontario, not everyone has that mindset, not everyone has that political will. So are you assuming that these mayors, once you give them the power, are going to be pushing for duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes in residential areas, semi-detached homes, which already exist, four-storey walk-ups, addressing the missing middle?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Yes, I think the missing middle is something all parties need to put their minds to. Certainly, that was something that came up in 2019, in some of the changes we made for More Homes, More Choice. Obviously, we felt that that was particularly important.

The bill and the associated regulations provide that legislative accountability and transparency for those mayors, so that when they start the new term, they'll be able to put that plan in place.

Let's use Mayor Tory as an example. He tabled his five-point housing plan yesterday. Let's say he's successful, for the committee's sake. He could take that five-point plan, because it's a provincial priority, present it to council, and

then you have that back-and-forth that's part of this bill, Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.

So I think we're talking about the same opportunity. We need to work with those two mayors to ensure that provincial priorities are met. I've said it probably four or five times already in committee today—over the next decade, we have to have that level of growth in Toronto and Ottawa. I don't care who you talk to; they've got to get shovels in the ground faster.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** And how will you address the vacant homes? Are you addressing it in this bill?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Yes, I'm quite willing to work with the two mayors on how we move forward on provincial priorities. I think, suffice it to say, when we're in this big of a housing crisis, even with the year we just had last year, we need to fire on all cylinders.

As I've said in my opening address, we're going to have a housing bill each and every year under the four years. There's no one silver bullet that's going to fix the housing supply crisis. It's not a one-and-done thing. We need to continue, as a government, to put amendments forward, to put bills forward, to put regulations forward to get shovels in the ground.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** That's the end of this round.

I'll now go to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP McGregor.

**0930**

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Thank you, Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Sabawy.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing in front of the committee and for the work you do on getting more shovels in the ground and getting houses built.

I note the members opposite talked about a lack of consultation, Minister—and I know the 1.5 million new homes that, certainly, our party promised in the last election over the next 10 years came through lots of consultation. Could the minister outline a little bit of the work done through the housing task force and through others? How did we arrive at that 1.5 million number, and why is that so critical for the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** That's a great question, because it wasn't just the Housing Affordability Task Force that coined that number; there were a number of other studies—Scotiabank, CMHC, everyone highlighted the need to build more housing.

As I said before the committee, we had our best year in 30 years last year, with 100,000 starts. It was our best year since the mid-1980s in terms of purpose-built rental, but it's still not enough. There are still too many Ontarians who can't find a home that meets their needs and their budget, whatever type of home it is.

So the Housing Affordability Task Force used some of those studies. They also met with stakeholders and other interested parties, which resulted in that task force—which we were very open and transparent about, as a government, during the election. We looked Ontarians in the eye

and said, “This will be our long-term road map to get 1.5 million homes.”

What did mayors say in response to the Housing Affordability Task Force? They said, “We need additional tools.”

This is just one tool that we’re providing to mayors in our two largest cities, to be able to get those priority projects done, those provincial priorities, but most importantly from our perspective, to help us implement that 1.5-million-homes plan over the next decade.

So there was a lot of consultation, and there will continue to be lots of conversation moving forward.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** We know, on this side of the House—and certainly, as a millennial member of provincial Parliament, I think that the housing crisis is a generational challenge facing us in this country.

The minister outlined that one third of the growth would be happening in Toronto and Ottawa. Can you speak a little bit more to that number, define that number a little bit more, and speak about how these tools, specifically in this piece of legislation, would help get shovels in the ground to meet that growth?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I think what it does, MPP McGregor, is, it puts forward a plan for those two mayors at the very start of the next term—the mayors would be able to hire a CAO, hire certain department heads, so they would really be able to assemble their team to be able to deliver on that provincial priority. As someone who was a former mayor and a former municipal CAO, I know how important the budget process is. That really allows the mayor and the team that he or she will appoint to be able to get that plan in place, so that we can get shovels in the ground faster. It’s critical because of that need to have that huge amount of growth in our two largest cities. They need to be able to hit the ground running at the start of the term, assembling the team and presenting that plan, either through the budget or directly to council, on that priority.

I can’t emphasize enough the importance of the associated regulations that would be needed to be put in place if this bill passes. And then—to pick up on the opposition’s point—the conversation will continue with those other municipalities outside of Toronto and Ottawa.

Again, it’s a very clear message: You have to be committed to growth, committed to being able to get shovels in the ground, and you’ve got to be able to put that plan in place. Those are the types of communities we’re looking for.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Thank you, Minister, for that response.

Another concern that we’ve heard on the other side is, why the rush? Why now? What is the urgency? We know that we need to get moving towards the 1.5 million number. Last year had a record amount of housing starts. Why does this legislation need to be passed right now? What’s the urgency?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Well, the urgency is exactly—you hit the nail on the head when you first asked the question. There are too many young people who, right now, don’t see attainable home ownership as a path. There are too

many seniors in Ontario who want to downsize but don’t see that there’s an opportunity in the market for them to do so. There is not enough supply. It takes too long to get municipal approvals.

The government needs to continue to build upon its success that we saw last year, but also the success with the two housing supply action plans: More Homes, More Choice, and More Homes for Everyone.

Again, I can’t emphasize enough that there is not one thing that a government can do, no matter what political party is at the helm, to solve the housing crisis. We need to work together. We need to work with all three levels of government, including the federal government, to ensure that we’re all trying to do whatever we can to get shovels in the ground faster.

We’ve got a municipal election that’s on. Housing is going to be the top issue in communities both large and small in all corners of the province. We need to ensure that our two biggest cities have what they need, and this is exactly what we’re trying to accomplish.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate the presentation. I would like to commend you for all the activities we are trying to do and thinking out of the box to find solutions for the housing crisis.

We heard during the March–April time frame, when we introduced the More Homes for Everyone Act, which was trying to accelerate the process of getting shovels in the ground, that accountability comes with authority. If we are holding the mayors accountable, we need to give them the authority to accelerate that process. How do you see this legislation as a complement to the More Homes for Everyone Act to accelerate that?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** That’s a good question.

When we tabled More Homes for Everyone, it was our plan to get housing brought online faster. Mayors responded very quickly to say that they needed additional tools over and above what was provided in that act. We countered that we wanted everyone to know that the Housing Affordability Task Force report was our long-term road map, but that we would take back their comments and put a plan in place. This is part of that plan that would deal with those two largest cities in our province.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Do you see that as a message to the mayors of both cities, and other mayors of the province, that we are determined about solving this crisis?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Yes, absolutely. I didn’t get the feedback that the opposition received. I had a number of mayors come forward and express interest, who want to continue that conversation after—

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

Moving on to the next round: MPP Burch for seven and a half minutes, please.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Minister, the bill, as my colleague has pointed out, purports to be about building homes, but apart from the bill’s title, there’s really nothing in the bill about building homes. There is nothing that implements a single recommendation of the Housing Affordability Task Force

that you mentioned, such as any exclusionary zoning or enabling more missing-middle housing. There's nothing that establishes a public home builder or ensures the construction of new affordable homes. There's nothing that ensures the construction of basement apartments or lane-way homes or granny flats. There's nothing that expands inclusionary zoning. In fact, the word "housing" never even appears in the bill. So it's not clear to us what problem the bill is trying to solve.

The mayor of Toronto, John Tory, hasn't lost a single significant vote at council. There is no evidence that a mayoral veto would have any change on any significant council outcomes.

You have claimed that the bill is necessary because some municipalities are blocking housing, but even if that were true, you haven't explained how giving more power to a mayor would address the issue. The bill can't force, for example, a NIMBY council to support a pro-housing bylaw. There is no evidence that a mayor tends to be any less or more NIMBY than their council. So we really can't make that connection, and I don't think you've made that case, quite frankly.

I am a former councillor and budget chair, and I can't for the life of me figure out and make that connection between giving a veto power to a mayor and enabling a council to build more housing. Can you try to make that connection for us?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I've made the connection. The fact that we're allowing the mayor to present a budget and hire department heads—I know, as a former mayor and a former CAO, that you have to have that plan in place. We need those councils to work with the mayor. Nothing changes the relationship between the mayor and council. Outside of those provincial priorities, the mayor still gets one vote. It still operates similarly to prior to this legislation. But we have to ensure that those tools are given to those mayors. In that meeting that the Premier and I had, people were very clear with us that it wasn't just changes that had to take place at the municipal level—that we had to provide those opportunities.

**0940**

I realize that not every mayor—again, with 444 mayors, you're going to get a wide variety of opinions. You came to the AMO conference, I think, just like I did. Our government did 586 delegations. There wasn't common thinking about a number of municipal priorities.

The one thing people acknowledge—and it doesn't matter whose numbers you use—is that we have a housing supply crisis.

One of your members, the member for London—Fanshawe, the other day—I was so proud that she actually acknowledged the plan we presented to the people, that we need to build 1.5 million homes. I gave her a big round of applause because I was glad that one member of the opposition actually acknowledged that that's what needs to get done.

This is part of a plan that will get it done. This is part of a plan that will allow those mayors to be able to hire a

team, to assemble a team after the election, and when the new term begins, they'll be able to be housing-friendly.

The report that Mayor Tory tabled yesterday—if he's successful, this is exactly what we're giving him the power to implement.

We're giving another mayor, in Ottawa, the power, depending on who takes the chain of office, to put a plan in place to really start to deal with some of the issues that the two of you mentioned, the things like the missing middle—

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** The bill draws a line between veto powers and provincial priorities. But I don't think you've explained why any mayor elected to serve municipal voters would willingly overturn a council vote to serve the Premier.

The province already has legitimate ways of identifying provincial interests and requiring municipal consistency with provincial policies, especially with respect to housing and development.

So if the problem is that municipalities are not complying with provincial laws, how does a mayoral veto help? Why doesn't the province just use existing powers? What is the link between a mayoral veto and provincial priorities?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** The provincial priority that I'm talking to the committee about today is the fact that we need more housing supply. So the mayor would be able to present a report directly to council about the provincial priority, or, using the budget scenario, be able to present a budget. Council can amend that budget. The mayor could accept the amendments. I'm not going to hypothesize about what's going to happen after the municipal elections, but theoretically the mayor could accept the amendments by the council. The mayor could also veto them.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** But what's the link between the veto and the provincial priority? I don't understand. The council—

**Hon. Steve Clark:** We have to ensure that there is transparency and accountability on those provincial priorities. We are providing this opportunity for the two mayors in our two largest cities to share a priority. This is a shared priority, to build 1.5 million homes.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Do you think this bill promotes transparency?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Absolutely. There are transparency measures—

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** But it gives the mayor a veto power, and the mayor can come up with his own budget. How does Bill 3 possibly promote transparency?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** MPP Burch, you served at the municipal level like I did. You know how important that budget is to deal not just with our shared priorities and housing—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** One minute left.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I would hope you would agree that 1.5 million homes is a shared priority among all three levels of government. I would hope you would acknowledge that we have a housing supply problem and that,

collectively, the province, Ontario's 444 municipalities and the federal government have a shared priority.

The number one opportunity for a council to deliver on its community's priorities is in its budget. You were a budget chief. You know—

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** But how does the mayor vetoing a council decision promote transparency, and coming up with a budget on his own—

**Hon. Steve Clark:** We have to ensure that mayors have the tools they need to act on our provincial priorities.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** But that doesn't make municipal government more transparent. It makes it less transparent, doesn't it?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Other than the provincial priorities in the budget, it doesn't change the relationship with council.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** If they're vetoing each other, it does.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Well, there are opportunities right now where councils disagree with their mayor. It's called democracy.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I'll now move to MPP McMahon for five minutes.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Minister, you're saying that the time for action is now, that we need to move quickly to address this housing crisis, that we cannot wait any longer.

I am finding some glaring holes in this bill that have not been addressed. I think one of the most puzzling things for me is that it only involves Ottawa and Toronto—expecting those two cities to solve the housing crisis across Ontario. Are we only building homes in Toronto and Ottawa? Mississauga, Brampton, Barrie and other municipalities—do they not, all of a sudden, have a housing crisis too? Are we expecting those 1.5 billion homes just to be in Ottawa and Toronto? If we really need to move quickly to address this crisis, and if you're saying that in the next election housing is going to be a top issue for all municipalities—why not all municipalities now? Why just Ottawa and Toronto?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Well, because of the amount of growth we expect in those two cities over the next 10 years, we wanted to prioritize Ontario's two largest cities first. We wanted to ensure that, with this bill and the associated regulations, we get it right. So we are focusing first on Toronto and Ottawa, with a view that if there are other communities that are committed to growth, committed to cutting red tape and getting shovels in the ground faster, we'll continue that conversation.

I'm hoping that we'll get feedback, not just at this committee for this bill's discussion, but for the engagement that we've had with municipalities at AMO, that we've had with municipalities after and before the Housing Affordability Task Force report was completed. The Premier was very clear at AMO that we want to continue the conversation with other municipalities.

But given the size of Toronto and Ottawa, given the fact that over the next 10 years a third of that growth is going to be in those two communities, we have to ensure that, when it comes to this bill, we get it right. That's why we're

focusing on the two. We're not saying that we are not going to engage the other 444 municipalities; we are. I think our record, as a government, whether it be for More Homes, More Choice, for More Homes for Everyone, some of the initiatives that are in the Housing Affordability Task Force—we are going to, as a government, continually bring forward legislation and regulations that get shovels in the ground faster for everyone, for all 444 municipalities.

The year that we had last year—the best year in 30 years, with 100,000 housing starts, was across the province.

We are committed to ensuring that all of our municipal partners share in the priority of building housing.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** The member across from me congratulated you on your outside-the-box thinking for addressing the housing crisis, which this bill is supposedly going to be the golden ticket to do.

I'm wondering, since you're thinking outside the box, are you thinking of different ways to address the housing crisis?

As we mentioned earlier, the vacant homes—how serious are you on that? I have a home that has been empty near me—a beautiful, four-bedroom home—for over 30 years.

There are other models around the world. There's a housing trust model in New York City, which I'm sure you're well aware of: 1% slapped on the resale of market-rate homes in mixed neighbourhoods to go into a pool to build more affordable homes.

There's the shared-equity model in the UK—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** One minute left.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** —where you buy what you can afford and either keep that model or rent to own.

What other outside-the-box ideas are you thinking of? Are you thinking of those?

**0950**

**Hon. Steve Clark:** We were very transparent with Ontarians during the last election. We indicated, time and time again—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I have to interrupt. There's a point of order from MPP Sabawy. Excuse me.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I'm just correcting the record. I didn't say that there's one golden bullet to solve the issue. I agree with the minister that there is no one bulletproof—

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I said that you said “outside the box.”

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I don't think it's a valid point of order, so I will resume the discussion. There are 36 seconds left.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Thanks. We were honest with Ontarians, very transparent during the election. We said that we wanted to build 1.5 million homes over 10 years. We said we were going to use the Housing Affordability Task Force report as our road map.

And as part of this bill, we announced the Housing Supply Action Plan Implementation Team, with Mayor Dilkens and Mayor Fort. They're going to be looking at

those recommendations with a team of other individuals to implement those ideas.

There are a number of other ideas that the government has been presented with, and as I've said, we committed to Ontarians in the last election that under a re-elected government—

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

I now go to the government side for the remaining seven and a half minutes. MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be sharing my time with MPP Hardeep Singh Grewal.

Thank you, Minister Clark. We appreciate everything that you're doing.

In my specific riding, I can see that giving tools to local municipalities is a very important issue. This is a complex issue. We talked about the silver bullet; I don't believe there is one specific silver bullet.

You touched on something that I thought was very interesting, because you talked about the 1.5 million we need just in the next 10 years—but as a mother, I want to know beyond that, which is a huge issue for me, because we don't want our children living in our basements indefinitely. I'm more interested in the future right now, be it rental, not-for-profit, single or detached, because they have to have options.

Can the minister specifically discuss what other steps will be taken to address this housing crisis?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** That's a great question.

What I said previously to MPP McMahon about the fact that we were honest and transparent with Ontarians, where we said the Housing Affordability Task Force report would be that long-term road map—to speak to your concern, over time, we need to look at those recommendations and put a plan in place to implement them. That's why Mayor Dilkens and Mayor Fort are going to lead our implementation team for that plan.

There are a number of other options. We've heard Premier Ford talk about a plan for attainable housing. Both the Premier and I have spoken about repurposing our own provincial lands. We made an announcement in your riding, prior to the election, with Mayor Bevilacqua where we were going to offer a piece of provincial land that was unused to a non-profit to create a housing opportunity in consultation with the community.

So there are a number of very innovative ideas that have come up, not just during the task force report, but that became pretty evident during the election. We need to do a better job working with our existing provincial land portfolio, to give chances for co-ops or non-profits to be able to work with the private sector on innovative opportunities that meet people's needs and their budgets—the fact that not all communities are the same, and that what might be needed in Thornhill is not the same as what might be needed in downtown Toronto or in Brampton or in Scarborough. There are different needs for individuals, and we have to make sure that we build in the flexibility. That's exactly what this plan does.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** When you talk about that flexibility—which is really important, because my riding

of Thornhill is different from others; all of us agree that we have unique locations—can you speak to how those unique communities will be dealt with at that time, just so that they can be identified in their individuality?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** One of the things in this bill I want to emphasize is the fact that regardless of the fact that we're focused on Toronto and Ottawa, for every municipality that's committed to growth, that wants to provide that affordable opportunity, we're open to continue that conversation.

Again, the message to people in your riding is that if your community is committed to growth, committed to getting shovels in the ground faster, committed to working with the government, we're open to hearing your suggestions, your comments, your ideas.

Suffice it to say, we know as a government that every municipality has housing needs right now. The supply crisis is at a point that, regardless of all of our past success, we need to keep moving forward. We need to add those opportunities, providing that flexibility that you and I just spoke about, but also to work collaboratively. This is a shared priority with every single mayor and every council in the province, no matter where you live. We need to do a better job and more collaborating. We can pat ourselves on the back all we want about last year; we have to focus on not just this year but the next 10 years.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Grewal.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** Thank you, Minister, for all the great work you've been doing behind the scenes in putting together this bill.

The idea of a strong-mayor system has been floated around for years. Other governments have considered it. The Liberal government considered it. Premier McGuinty considered it at a previous time. I just want to talk about the similar systems that are in place in London, New York, Paris, Chicago—we're basically taking ideas from them, seeing things that are working for them, and then trying to implement them here in Toronto and Ottawa and, in the future, across Ontario.

Why do we actually need these changes in cities like Toronto and Ottawa, and how is this going to fix the broken system we are in today?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** That's a great question.

As I said in my short address, this isn't a new concept. There are strong-mayor systems around the world. I mentioned London, Paris, Los Angeles, Chicago. The Premier has talked about providing stronger mayor powers for many years.

As someone who was a mayor—I was elected 40 years ago this November, at the tender age of 22—I found out about the strong-mayor system literally a month after my election. We had a sister-city relationship with a community in Ontario, California. I got a call asking me, as the new mayor, who I was hiring and who I was firing, and I didn't understand what they were talking about.

So I learned about strong mayors 40 years ago, and I understand the opportunities to provide a mix of executive powers and additional responsibilities provides an opportunity.

In our case, we have to do something, we have to give mayors—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** One minute left.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** —especially in the two biggest cities in our province, the tools they need to do the job.

I'm very unique in this chamber in that I was both an elected official and then, just prior to my election in 2010, I was a CAO in a small township. But it's the same process—the budget process, for anyone around this table who served municipally, is a very powerful process. It sets, along with senior department heads and the CAO, the opportunity to set a plan in place for success.

I think providing this opportunity for the two biggest city mayors in our province, when they begin a term, is critical to ensuring that we get shovels in the ground faster.

The stat I want to give you again—remember that World Bank stat: 34th out of 35 OECD countries in getting shovels in the ground and pulling a permit. Regardless of what the opposition says, this is a problem and—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much. That concludes our business for today.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Monday, August 29, 2022. Thank you, everyone.

*The committee adjourned at 0959.*



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