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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

HE-4

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-4

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

Strong Mayors,
Building Homes Act, 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

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Monday 29 August 2022

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Lundi 29 août 2022

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**

Monday 29 August 2022

Lundi 29 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 broadcasting and recording.

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

Today's presenters have been scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot, with each presenter allotted seven minutes for an opening statement, followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses, divided into two rounds of 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 four and a half minutes for the independent member of the committee. Are there any questions? Okay.

**ONTARIO HOME BUILDERS'
ASSOCIATION
DR. MYER SIEMIATYCKI
BUILDING INDUSTRY AND LAND
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION**

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I will now call on our first three presenters. When you begin to speak for your presentations, please state your name for the record.

In this group of three, we have the Ontario Home Builders' Association. Please just state your name before you begin.

Mr. Bob Schickedanz: Good morning, Chair Scott and committee members. My name is Bob Schickedanz. I'm president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association. I appreciate this opportunity this morning to speak to you today in support of Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act. I'm also pleased to be joined later on by my colleagues Dave Wilkes, president and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association of the GTA, and Alex Piccini, manager of government relations at OHBA.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association has over 4,000 member businesses across the province, representing home builders, renovators and home construction industry professionals through our network of 27 local associations across Ontario. We are also the voice of future Ontarians, who want a place to call home. It's fair to say that our sector is a tremendous economic driver in Ontario. In fact, the residential construction industry contributes over 550,000 jobs, pays more than \$37 billion in wages, and drives close to \$77 billion of investment in our province each and every year.

We know that future Ontarians are becoming increasingly angry and frustrated and are being priced out of our province because we simply don't have enough of the housing supply we need.

Most recently, the provincial Housing Affordability Task Force and all major parties, during the recent provincial election, acknowledged that Ontario requires 1.5 million homes over the next decade to restore affordability. This is a tremendous challenge and one that our industry takes seriously and that we're ready to tackle, but we need the right tools in the box to get the job done. It demands immediate and also long-term planning decisions by government to dramatically increase the pace of new home construction and, at the same time, reduce barriers that accelerate housing costs.

OHBA is here today to support Bill 3 because it makes important steps towards accelerating housing supply as a priority at the municipal level and enables large municipalities to get on with the task of supporting the construction of more homes of all kinds. My colleague Dave Wilkes from BILD can speak to the Toronto-specific details and the important impact this legislation will have.

However, zooming out to the provincial level, I can offer some additional context.

We all know Ontario is a growing province. A 2021 report by the Smart Prosperity Institute noted that, since 2016, population increases were widespread, particularly in the southern portion of the province. In fact, by 2031 we will have 2.27 million more people living here, and they all need a place to live.

Communities big and small outside the GTA are experiencing tremendous growth. With working from home becoming more established, individuals and families are looking for more attainable places to live, and it's no surprise that growth is occurring all over Ontario. While many still look to the GTA, others look to outside communities, both urban and rural. Statistics Canada noted in a recent report on municipal population growth that full-time remote work has created opportunities for many Canadians to live in more distant suburbs or rural areas that would not have been deemed a viable option before the onset of the pandemic.

Bill 3 has the potential to enable municipalities outside Ottawa and Toronto to better prepare for growth in the coming years. As a home builder, I can tell committee members that enabling heads of council to have greater ability to leverage municipal resources and focus on housing would be most beneficial for prioritizing home supply, simplifying processes, and getting more homes built for future Ontarians. Simply put, strong mayors means incentivizing results, injecting more urgency into municipal approval systems, and getting more homes built.

I will turn it over now to my colleague Alex for some additional comments, and I would be pleased to answer any questions after our presentation.

Mr. Alex Piccini: Thank you to the committee members for taking the time to hear from OHBA today on Bill 3. It's a pleasure to join OHBA president Bob Schickedanz and my colleague Dave Wilkes, from BILD, in support of this legislation. I think—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Please state your name for the record, for Hansard.

Mr. Alex Piccini: My apologies, Madam Chair. I'm Alex Piccini from the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

I think Bob captured the facts perfectly. Ontario is growing at breakneck speed, and our sector must be the voice for future Ontarians. We need to dramatically accelerate the delivery of housing supply if we're going to meet that goal of one and a half million homes over the next decade. Bold changes, not half measures, are what are drastically needed if we're going to meet that threshold and restore attainability to housing in Ontario. Thousands of current and future Ontarians are counting on the homes that are not yet built, so it is incumbent on the province to set the right stage for industry to build. The costs of not doing so vastly outweigh the investment in new housing that is needed. If we do not start to address the supply deficit, Ontarians will face more economic [inaudible] affordable jurisdictions—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One-minute warning.

Mr. Alex Piccini: This would put our province at an economic disadvantage, unable to attract the talent and skills that we need to thrive.

Beyond economic considerations are the social and family implications that a lack of housing supply will have. Without dramatically increasing the number of homes in communities both big and small, it will force many to move farther away from existing residences, their friends and family.

I want to wrap up by quickly touching on five priority items that OHBA and BILD jointly released earlier this month, including: making homes more affordable by speeding up approval timelines and eliminating red tape, making more lands available to build on, adding certainty to the cost of new housing, laying the groundwork for future growth, and taking the politics out of planning. Bill 3 speaks to a number of these priorities. Most importantly, it speaks to the priorities of future Ontarians who are depending on more attainable housing options—

Failure of sound system.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sorry. We lost sound for your last remaining seconds. We lost your audio. Sorry, Mr. Piccini—but the last few seconds? Okay.

We will now move to the next witness in this round. I will now call on Myer Siemiatycki, if you would please begin your presentation now and state your name.

Dr. Myer Siemiatycki: Good morning. Thank you, Ms. Scott and all committee members, for this opportunity to offer my thoughts on Bill 3. I'm Myer Siemiatycki, professor emeritus of politics and public administration at Toronto Metropolitan University, formerly known, of course, as Ryerson University. I've taught courses on municipal government for over 40 years, and during that span of time I've also been a frequent media commentator on political affairs.

Let me add a final personal bio point that might be relevant. I'm generally a "glass half full" kind of person. I like to accentuate the positive. Regrettably, I don't have positives to say about Bill 3. That's because I don't think it fulfills its stated objectives—and will create a host of problems. I don't think Bill 3 meaningfully strengthens city mayors; rather, I actually think it weakens them, and it creates new risks for their city government—nor do I think the bill's measures will make a dent in our housing problems. The province already has more than enough powers to do that, and I wish Queen's Park would exercise them.

0910

I'm certainly not alone in my skepticism over Bill 3. Toronto's five living past mayors have all gone on record as opposed to this bill. Interestingly, these were mayors from all political stripes—a Conservative, an NDPer, a Liberal and, in fact, an independent.

Bill 3 is not a partisan issue. It's a question of good governance and solving real problems; I'm sorry that Bill 3 achieves neither. Instead, it will create a host of new problems for mayors and for municipalities while generally leaving our housing problems to fester.

Let me use my remaining time to elaborate.

Bill 3 is another example of Ontario provincial governments misusing municipalities for their own interests. It turns our mayors from local chief magistrates into provincial enforcement officers at city hall. The veto power accorded to the mayor in this legislation applies only to council decisions that are counter to “prescribed provincial priorities.” Mayors will now be expected, and perhaps even pressured, to overturn majority decisions of their democratically elected councils in order to comply with provincial policy. This doesn’t strengthen mayors or local government.

Bill 3 further mistakenly assumes that mayoral authority in Ontario is handcuffed by the other elected members of council. Mayors in Ontario have more than enough authority and soft powers to lead their council. No one ever accused Mississauga’s Hazel McCallion of being a weak mayor. And Toronto Mayor John Tory, for instance, has not lost a single significant vote on council during his eight years in office. What really weakens mayors are the limited financial resources and statutory powers that cities receive from the province. Instead of addressing this, Bill 3 sets its sights on weakening the role of municipal councillors.

The bill gives the mayor sole authority to hire and fire senior city staff. This is dangerous. It will turn a professional, neutral, high-quality senior staff into personal selections of the mayor and no one else. In such a system, senior staff will recommend and deliver what the mayor wants, regardless of council and city residents’ preferences. That’s not a public administration model designed for excellent government.

Additionally, Bill 3 will give mayors super powers over the municipal budget. Not long ago, Toronto experienced a successful public and city council revolt against a previous mayor who promoted a budget making deep cuts to municipal services. Do we really want to further centralize budget powers in the mayor’s hands rather than in a majority of council backed by public input? I don’t think so.

In considering your stance on Bill 3, I would ask committee members and all members of the Legislature to consider this: Are municipalities a legitimate democratic form of government? If so, is there any red line a province should not cross in imposing its will on municipalities, and is Bill 3 that red line?

Furthermore, I would ask the members of this committee from the governing party to consider this: The day will inevitably come when another party forms government at Queen’s Park. How will you feel back in your hometowns if the next provincial government tells mayors to align your local government’s decisions with its prescribed provincial priorities? I imagine you may well be back before this committee yourselves complaining about the loss of local democracy.

Bill 3 sets a bad precedent for continued local government subordination to provincial dictates.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Dr. Myer Siemiatycki: For almost 200 years, Ontario municipalities have been well served by a governance

model based on mayoral-led, collegial, collaborative governance rooted in strong ties to their residents. That needs to continue.

Lastly, on the housing front: There are three measures that the Ontario government has available to it to address our housing problems. The provincial government should enact inclusionary residential zoning requirements across Ontario. It should require, as previous provincial governments have done, that a minimum percentage of all new residential construction be affordable. The province should ramp up investment in non-profit rental housing, the surest path to affordable housing.

Last comment: There are useful ways to give mayors more power in Ontario and to successfully address Ontario’s housing problems—

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

We’ll now move to the third presentation this morning, from the Building Industry and Land Development Association, in person. Please go ahead and state your name before you begin your seven-minute presentation.

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Good morning, committee members, and thank you, Chair Scott, for the opportunity to address you. My name is Dave Wilkes, and I’m the president and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association of the GTA, or as we’re better known, BILD. I’m happy to be here today to speak in support of Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022.

With more than 1,300 members, BILD is the voice of new homebuyers, as represented through our membership of home builders, land developers and professional renovators in the greater Toronto area. As an industry, we provide more than 231,000 jobs and over \$26.9 billion in investment on an annual basis.

BILD is proudly affiliated with my colleagues Alex and Bob, from the Ontario Home Builders’ Association, and, federally, with the Canadian Home Builders’ Association. Our members are responsible for virtually all new housing in the GTA, and they also build commercial, industrial and workspaces necessary to support the growth of the region, which we proudly call the economic engine of Canada.

The root of the current affordability crisis, which is centred in the GTA, is a lack of supply and the time it takes to bring new housing to market. As Alex and Bob mentioned, the Housing Affordability Task Force identified that Ontario needs to build 1.5 million more homes in the province in the next 10 years to meet demand and bring balance to the market. Ottawa’s Smart Prosperity Institute, an independent third-party think tank led by Mike Moffatt, validated that number two weeks ago and found that half of the 1.5 million homes need to be built in Peel, York and Toronto. In fact, according to Mike, roughly 260,000 of those homes need to be built in Toronto. To put this in perspective versus current levels of housing, 2021 was the best year for housing starts in the last 34 years, with just over 100,000 starts. To build the 1.5 million homes that Ontario needs in the next decade will require us to increase over 2021 by over 50%—or 50,000 more housing starts on

an annual basis—and maintain that pace for a decade. Meeting that need will require bold and decisive action across multiple fronts: planning, land availability, labour and productivity. A lot of that bold and decisive action will be focused at the municipal level.

0920

We need to dramatically speed approvals, streamline planning, and remove barriers to land development to specifically increase housing starts over current levels. To help support these ambitious targets, earlier this month BILD and OHBA released a five-point plan that was referenced by my colleagues. I think it bears repeating, though. The five points:

- making homes more affordable by speeding up approval times and eliminating red tape; each month of delay in approvals adds thousands of dollars to the cost of a new home;

- adding certainty to the cost of a new home by addressing out-of-control growth funding tools, most notably, development charges; already, fees and taxes from levels of government account for over 25% of the cost of a new home;

- making new lands available to new housing and to support future growth, as home supplying costs are highly dependent on land availability;

- laying the infrastructure groundwork for future growth by ensuring servicing and transportation infrastructure is prioritized;

- taking the politics out of planning to ensure that local decision-making does not undermine the voice of new homebuyers and the provision of new housing.

We would recommend that the above points form the basis of the provincial priorities that will be established within the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act's regulation to enable the delivery of more housing. Based on these priorities, this bill will help municipalities deliver more housing, in our opinion, in two fundamental ways: It will increase the ability of mayors to establish staff accountability and line of sight to decision-making and provide mayors the opportunity to implement necessary changes to address housing issues. Let me elaborate.

First, by increasing alignment of departments and accountability of department heads, it will help achieve the city priorities and the intent of provincial objectives and legislation by increasing accountability between staff and the mayor. This will engender a culture that removes barriers and speeds approvals by providing, as I've said, a direct line of sight between the mayor and staff and providing the ability to direct resources to areas that require them and undertake organizational changes to prove effectiveness and efficiency where required.

Second, the bill will provide the mayor with a greater platform to set the agenda and policy directions with council as it applies to housing supply and density. This will help balance the voices and needs of existing residents, which are obviously important, with those that are now often unheard—future homebuyers—to implement changes that are necessary to achieve the deficit that I referred to earlier.

Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to provide our support for Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022. We are at a pivotal time in housing in our province, particularly within the GTA. We must seek new approaches. We must take bold and decisive action, as represented by Bill 3, to address the generational housing affordability challenges we are facing.

I look forward to your questions.

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

We'll now move to questions and answers. I'll start with the official opposition. MPP Bell. Seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you so much to all of you for coming here to speak.

My first question is to Myer Siemiatycki. One of the issues that I've heard from constituents is how putting more power into the mayor's office will limit the authority that individual councillors have in Toronto. Councillors in Toronto have upwards of 100,000 people voting for them, and there is real value in ensuring councillors have the power over the budgetary process and the power they need to represent their constituents well.

I was wondering if you could speak to how democracy and civic engagement are limited by concentrating power in the mayor's office.

Dr. Myer Siemiatycki: I think that's a very important problem attached to this legislation. Thank you for asking for my further thoughts on that, Ms. Bell.

There's no question that if this legislation goes through, it will marginalize the input and the voice of city councillors. By doing that, who it's really harming are local residents. Currently, the councillors have a single vote on all municipal issues. They also collectively appoint the senior staff of the city. It is currently not a unilateral decision of the head of council, the mayor. So, if we go down the path of this legislation, ward councillors will effectively be sidelined in the major decisions that a city government is making. The senior staff will see their careers as totally dependent on approval from the mayor. That means that the kind of advice that will come to city council and the recommendations that will come to city council from senior staff will, out of their own self-protectiveness, be framed by what they perceive the mayor to want, and what councillors connected to local residents advocate will be inconsequential.

I want to flag one implication of this. Cities and their local government are a great Canadian success story. You may have seen that recently the Economist magazine ranked the top 10 cities in the world. Toronto makes the cut, as do two other Canadian cities. We are a tiny country in population, and yet we hit way above our weight in the value and the ranking of our cities. That is because we have a collegial, collective form of municipal government connected to residents, and that's what's at stake of being lost in Bill 3.

I think we have more than enough examples around the world of what happens when you overly centralize power,

political power, in the hands of one leader. I don't think that's a path Canadian municipalities should take.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My next question is to Bob and Alex from the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

One thing that surprises me about Bill 3 is that the ability for a city to build homes more quickly really depends upon the personality and the values of the mayor at hand. I wonder why the government doesn't focus more on what it can do, provincially, to speed up housing construction for homes for Ontarians and future Ontarians.

I have a question to Bob and Alex: What measures are you advocating for the Ontario government to lead on to build more missing-middle homes?

Mr. Bob Schickedanz: I'd like to address that commentary. Thank you for the question.

First off, certainly, municipalities are very impactful in terms of creating housing supply because they're essentially the gatekeepers. Rules and regulations are established at the provincial level, but implementation, by and large, takes place at the local level. It has been our experience in recent years, and considering the housing needs and the growth that the province is experiencing, that there have definitely been issues with implementation at the local level able to meet that demand and build homes quickly enough.

Essentially, Bill 3 is a bold step in giving the authority so adjustments can be made at the local level to hire the staff. Appropriate staff is needed to address the onslaught of applications coming forward to complement and build the housing to provide for the growth, and, finally, to streamline processes that are occurring currently so that the municipal focus can be achieved in a much more efficient manner.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Harden, you have one minute and 30 seconds.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'll be succinct. My question is for Mr. Wilkes.

Mr. Wilkes, you may know that the current mayor of our city, Jim Watson, has actually not supported this legislation. I'm wondering if you could help me understand—from the home builders' association—why Mr. Watson has taken that position. And if there's time for me to follow up, I will.

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Through you, Madam Chair, I can't comment directly on why Mayor Watson has taken the position he has, but I can comment on what we believe are the positive steps that this bill will take.

We talk about delays. For each month of delay, it adds about \$3,000 to a new home and \$2,000 to a new condo. If I look at how we can speed up approvals around that—providing a direct line of sight between staff and the mayor's office to create change. And how do we make sure that we reduce the 10 and 11 years it takes for projects to get built and bring them to the market? I think there's an opportunity that we would provide that line of sight—

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Mr. Wilkes.

Just in my closing moments—I have had my differences with our mayor. We've had our similarities

and agreements. I don't think I'd ever characterize him as not being a strong mayor.

So I think we need to consider in our debate over this legislation what will actually help address some of those issues.

I can tell you, all candidates presenting for mayor in our city for the upcoming elections, and the current mayor, are opposed to the legislation, so I think that's something we should be considering—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'll now move to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

0930

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you all for coming in or being on Zoom. I appreciate you taking the time to share your ideas with us.

My questions, initially, are for the Ontario Home Builders' Association and BILD. So, 1.5 million homes in 10 years—that's a lofty goal, especially since we're behind already. I would like to ask you both, what styles of homes, what types of homes, and I would like you to name them—also, what happens if there's a NIMBY mayor; how receptive will mayors be to all these styles of homes; and how to track the 1.5 million homes.

Mr. Alex Piccini: Certainly, from industry, we're very interested in building all different kinds of homes—everything from single detached to towns, to missing middle, as MPP Bell noted. There's a tremendous opportunity to build all typologies of homes across Ontario, in communities big and small, and really prioritizing that pro-housing, pro-home culture at city hall is an imperative to that. Fundamentally, that's how we're going to get to a state in which we are building at the rate we need to be. Certainly, the 1.5 million is a lofty goal—but it's imperative that industry have the tools in the tool box needed to construct the homes.

As my colleague Dave Wilkes from BILD mentioned, there are five priority items that really set the stage for constructing the housing supply to restore affordability and attainability in housing across Ontario—and we know that it's not necessarily just the large urban centres, although that is definitely a chief concern; it's outlying communities, too, that are experiencing tremendous growth pressures and need to be prepared to build and construct the communities that they need to sustain the growth they're going to see.

On the NIMBY question: The legislation does have, as you know, MPP McMahon, the two-thirds local veto over the initial veto, and so, from our perspective, the accountability is there. Certainly, it presents an opportunity for municipalities and heads of council to shape that culture and to define what it means to be pro-housing, pro-growth and locally focused on making sure that buying a home and reaching that great Canadian dream of home ownership is attainable.

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Through you, Madam Chair, I think that the perspective has been reflected in the recently released platform that Mayor Tory put for his re-election. With respect to homes, we need to add density where appropriate. He talked about missing middle around transit

areas. I think that's a huge opportunity to use that public infrastructure that we have built to provide more housing.

So it must be all types, it must be taking advantage of infrastructure and the investments around it, and it must be using—I'm a geographer by academic training—land to its highest and best use, in my opinion.

With respect to what happens if you get a council or a mayor who have different views than adding housing, I think the facts speak to themselves, with respect to the need. We've referenced that we're 50,000 short; we've referenced that there's 1.5 million more homes—we saw StatsCan come out saying, on the weekend, six million more Ontarians over the next two decades. I think the opportunity for leadership will be presented on addressing those issues and ensuring that we balance future homeowners' voices, which are often unheard, unfortunately, with local residents. I think we all have a responsibility to provide that type of leadership.

So in order to maintain the affordability we all want and the competitiveness of our industry, I would hope that we would have leadership that demonstrates the need for more housing.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's all for this round.

Now I'll move to the government for seven and a half minutes. MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for Mr. Bob Schickedanz from the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

I'll start by giving an introduction in regard to the commitment of the government to address the housing crisis. This bill comes in a list of other bills which the government put in place to accelerate the building of houses to address this housing crisis. We have the More Homes, More Choice Act, Bill 108, followed by the More Homes for Everyone Act, Bill 109, and here comes this bill, which is kind of the third level, trying to push those policies to implementation. We, as a government, see that with accountability comes authority. If we are going to hold those mayors accountable to address the housing crisis, we have to give them the tools to be able to address this and get their policies pushed on the ground.

Our government's policies have delivered the historic result of getting more housing built faster, and complement our more than \$4.3-billion investment over the past three years to grow an enhanced community and supportive housing for vulnerable Ontarians and Indigenous people. This is the first time a government has created a provincial housing supply action plan. We have a bigger plan to cut red tape and get more houses built faster. With this bill introduced, we are hoping to get the plan for introducing more houses faster.

Can you tell me, in practical words, where you think the delay happens when it comes to building the homes and delivering them faster to the end users?

Mr. Bob Schickedanz: Through you, Chair Scott, to answer the question, it has been stated numerous times this morning—in terms of what housing supply we need in the future years: 1.5 million. To put it in perspective, last year

was an aberration—that, actually, the industry produced 100,000 units, which was at our maximum capacity, I dare say, at this juncture. In the last 10 years, we've built on the order of perhaps 650,000 homes. That just magnifies the extent of the problem.

To the point that was just made: It's not just one item that will help us resolve this problem. We need many tools in the box, many items to help address this. We need investments in infrastructure. We need investments in skilled trades. We need to make sure we have the right land supply. We need to make sure, through this Bill 3, that local councils are efficient and move toward the unified, singular goal of providing the housing that we need. So we need all these components, as you mentioned, to work together in unison to achieve this goal—not to throw them out summarily and dismiss them, saying that perhaps they won't work. We need everything to be in place and to work forward in that regard—this has been deemed as a crisis— if we have any chance of addressing this crisis.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to put on the record that, according to what you said now, you see that 600,000 units were added in 10 years, when the record in 2021 shows that 100,000 units happened in the last year by itself—not only that; this is the highest level for housing starts in a single year since 1987, and not only for houses, but last year Ontario reached a 30-year record for new rental housing constructions, the most units built in a single year since 1991. Doesn't that give you any indication that the plan is in progress and we are going in the right direction to reach the 1.5 million?

0940

Mr. Bob Schickedanz: Well, there's no doubt that past initiatives that have been made, and recent past initiatives I'm referring to, have helped out during, actually, a very difficult time. We are just emerging from the pandemic and all the challenges that that had presented. Yes, last year, we rolled up our sleeves to get the job done. We built 100,000 units across the province, but that's not good enough.

As I mentioned, our industry, our members are willing and able and at the ready to do the job, but we need more support. We need the tools and the structure to make the approval process more efficient. We need the entire building process to become more efficient so we can go from the 100,000 units and perhaps we will get to that 150,000 units a year, which we really need. But we need all the support and we need all the measures in place functioning.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Do you have any statistics about the life cycle of the time needed from the developer acquiring the land, putting in the request for building till we get to a point where the units are available for new buyers? Any statistics you have that you can give us, enlighten—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute and 15 seconds.

Mr. Bob Schickedanz: I will say, unfortunately, it's 10 to 15 years before an application is made and before people move in. There's always a reason why perhaps

there's a delay—some environmental reasons and infrastructure reasons—but if the average is 10 to 15 years, there's something fundamentally wrong with the process, and it needs to be addressed. It needs to be made more efficient. Bill 3 is one of those measures to make the process more efficient.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I will address the same question to Mr. David Wilkes—if you can add, also, from your association's experience, in regard to the cycle to get a unit ready to a seller?

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

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Ten to 11 years—a study that we did with Altus. I'd be pleased to share it with the committee.

Three things that we could do faster: Speed up approvals and make sure that we have a culture of saying why as opposed to why not; designating land for growth—if we look at Bill 3, we see that in the city of Toronto, the vast majority of the land is designated for single-use residential. That could be changed with leadership from—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. I'm sorry. That's all the time we have.

I'll now go to the official opposition and MPP Burch. Seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to all the presenters for appearing this morning.

I want to start off with a comment that both Mr. Piccini and Mr. Wilkes made regarding taking the politics out of planning, and I want to talk about that for a moment with both of you.

As a former city councillor and budget chair myself—and I've also been involved in quite a few hiring committees, which is typically the way that councils hire senior staff and the CAO. Hiring committees are generally made up—especially outside of Toronto and Ottawa—of the mayor, a couple of members of senior staff. Council will have a vote and place a couple of city councillors onto that hiring committee. It's an objective process, where you interview a number of shortlisted candidates who are qualified. There's an objective process that's gone through, and you come to a number of candidates. With the position of CAO, the mayor usually has a veto anyway, because the committee doesn't want to hire a CAO the mayor doesn't like. So the mayor will generally approve that. It's a very good process, a very responsible one. It's somewhat transparent. There are city councillors. It's democratic.

Allowing a mayor to simply hire whoever they want regardless of their qualifications, regardless of their references—that, to me, doesn't take the politics out of it. That puts politics and subjectivity into it. Then, when you add to that this veto power that a mayor has and then a two-thirds veto power that council has over the veto, that sure doesn't sound to me like speeding things up and taking the politics out of the process. That sounds to me like putting a whole lot of politics into the process and slowing things down.

Can you justify that statement—that this bill takes the politics out of planning?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Through you, Chair: Thank you for the question, MPP Burch.

Two ways that I would address fundamentally—I think right now with the phrase “politics in planning,” we see a lot of focus on existing residents. We see a lot of reasons as to why development should not happen. We see a lot of reasons why change is resisted. Change is difficult. I certainly recognize that. I think that that voice is amplified to the detriment of housing affordability and our competitiveness, and we see of a lot of housing plans not going forward because of that. We also see a lot of delays in the process, the 10 to 11 years that we've been referring to, because of potential obstructions that are put in the way of housing that is required, whether they be appeals at the OLT, whether they be bulk designations in the heritage act—and certainly, I'm not here to suggest that we run roughshod over that, but it is guardrails around it.

So I think when we, as an industry, refer to “politics in planning”—it's that the voice of new homeowners is often a mute one, and the voice of existing residents and the lack of change is an amplified one. That would be the context I would provide for the commentary.

With respect to the question around, aren't we putting more politics into the process and more politics into hiring—to my knowledge, I don't believe the bill would prevent a hiring committee. I think it would do exactly what you've suggested, MPP Burch—ensuring that you have alignment between the council lead and the senior staff, which is often the case in any large organization.

From a democracy point of view, the electorate will have their ability to support—or not—the direction of mayors, recognizing that the bill currently is only focused on Ottawa and Toronto. Ultimately, any mayor will have to stand for re-election, and if the agenda is not going in the direction—then that's the ultimate democratic tool.

So I think there are a number of checks and balances along the way.

Where we are supportive is, we do believe change is necessary, we believe we need to look at different ways of approval, we believe we need to look at different ways of ensuring input from all voices—hence we believe that the increased accountability and line of sight between staff and the mayor is one that we will see that change happen.

Mr. Jeff Burch: But the legislation actually allows the mayor to hire a CAO without going through any of those processes, and also allows them—from our reading of the legislation—to come up with a budget all on their own.

I'd like to give Mr. Siemiatycki a chance to answer the same question, because I think he has a different perspective.

Dr. Myer Siemiatycki: Yes. On the question of hiring of senior staff, as I said in my opening remarks, I really think that is a very dangerous direction to go in. There's a reason why our parliamentary system and our system of government, generally, has moved towards establishing and relying on a neutral, professional, merit-based senior staff, endorsed by the collective body of legislators and decision-makers. That's what we have currently at the municipal level, and it has served municipalities in this

country incredibly well. This part of the legislation sets off alarm bells for me. So I think the move away from collective decision-making—merit-based, application-based—to what could become, in a worst-case scenario, whimsical personal selection is very dangerous for municipalities.

I'd like to make one comment about, understandably, much of the conversation that has revolved around housing. The price and cost of housing, whether ownership or rental, is a very complex phenomenon. The builders seem to be presuming that there's a reliable, assurable one-to-one relationship between supply and cost of housing.

0950

Mr. Schickedanz began by noting that there is an affordability problem with respect to housing for Ontarians. We've also learned that, over the past year, a record number of new housing starts were brought on market, and still in that period the cost of housing rose dramatically and the cost of rental rose even higher. Then, all of a sudden, over the last few months, the cost of purchasing houses fell precipitously, not because of that new supply, but because of a change of interest rates.

I would say it's a mistake—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you. I'm sorry. Your time is up.

I will now move on to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Since I'm sharing my time with MPP Blais, I'm going to need you to channel your inner Toastmasters and be super succinct in your answer. We have three questions.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for Mr. Wilkes.

Mr. Wilkes, you mentioned in your opening statement that you think these powers will give the mayors a bigger soapbox or a bigger platform, or something to that effect, to accelerate housing.

You also mentioned that fees play a huge role in the cost of housing. In Ottawa, the development charge bylaw is not a budget item. It's a separate bylaw, so the mayor won't be able to propose the DC bylaw. Also, fees for zoning applications and for supply and changes etc. are on a cost-recovery basis and actually pay for the staff to review the files to get projects approved and through the process. I'm wondering how lowering those fees will accelerate things if you can't hire the staff to actually approve the process.

Secondly, you also suggested that a strong mayor would be able to get zoning and densities approved faster—which, of course, is not a budget item. In Ottawa, the city's official plan has been approved for over a year, and it has been sitting on the minister's desk for the last year. The official plan would increase density, would add urban expansion and create new opportunities for families to move to the city. It seems like a strong executive system is actually stalling growth in Ottawa.

I'm wondering if you can address how this soapbox will actually build new homes.

Mr. Dave Wilkes: As I indicated to your colleague MPP—and through you, Madam Chair—unfortunately, I can't comment directly on Ottawa; my colleagues from the Ottawa home builders perhaps could. My area of expertise is within the GTA.

I'm not trying to avoid answering your question, but I also don't want to make up an answer.

I will use the opportunity of the question about how we can speed things up, and I'll use Toronto examples, if I may—I know I'm not directly. The mayor could provide opportunity to rezone land as a direction that he wants to follow through council, by looking at residential land and rezoning it and upzoning it to provide that missing middle. I think that would be an opportunity.

We also do support—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sorry. I'm going to have to cut you off because I have a question for Myer.

I would like you to elaborate on the powers you'd like to see Queen's Park exercise to actually deal with the housing crisis.

Dr. Myer Siemiatycki: I think there are some very basic steps that the province could take to dramatically enhance the supply of housing but also to assure its affordability. We heard a lot of talk about supply, but there isn't an automatic correlation between supply and cost.

So I would say the following: It could be much better—instead of calling on the municipality and the mayor to override councils in the interests of greater, for example, housing intensification, the province should use its authority to establish guidelines for that intensification across the province. We then wouldn't have to drag mayors and councils into that. This is a power that the province has, and the province should exercise it. Missing middle and affordability is a responsibility of the province. And the province could take those steps. It should—

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

Dr. Myer Siemiatycki: I would say that the province has to attach a certain minimum requirement of affordable units to all residential construction that happens in this province—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sorry. I have to cut you off because I have one last question, for Bob.

How are we tracking these 1.5 million homes? Checks and balances—how are they being tracked?

Mr. Bob Schickedanz: I believe the only way to track is to go to the 444 municipalities and see how many building permits have been pulled and keep track that way. That's the most accurate way to track what's happening.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What happens if they're not built, if we fall behind?

Mr. Bob Schickedanz: I believe that there should be an obligation, I'll call it, for municipalities to—for instance, the growth plan frames out what growth should happen in various municipalities and regions across the province, and we have the collective—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you. Sorry about that.

I'll now move to the government side. MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I have a question for Dave Wilkes.

A lot has been made, obviously, of the issue of housing affordability. I certainly think that's a generational issue facing us in this province.

Can you tie together for me a little bit the relationship between an increase in housing supply and what that does for affordability for homeowners?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Absolutely. Through you, Madam Chair, thank you for the question.

I respectfully disagree with my fellow panellists about supply and the ability to affect cost. I think, like in any market where demand is outstripping supply, you're going to have a market that's out of balance and you're going to see the affordability challenges we've faced. There has been a consensus that we need more homes. All parties have agreed on that. There has been research that demonstrates that we need that—and reinforced. StatsCan has indicated that six million more people are coming to this province over the next two decades.

I believe that if we add supply, if we add housing of all types and all requirements, we will have a market that is more in balance. It will address some of the key challenges that are being driven out of that around land availability and the cost of land. The cost of land is one of the highest components of new housing. If we have more land available to build more homes of all types, that is going to affect the market, ultimately. If we speed up approvals and reduce the cost and the delays in that, that will also increase the supply and affect affordability. So I do think it is a fundamental truth that if we address the factors that are limiting supply, as we've mentioned repeatedly—approvals, land availability, and the costs associated with it—we will achieve the goal we collectively share.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Specifically on the proposed powers for a mayor to bring an issue or topic up as a provincial priority—which could be housing—for a council's consideration, could you speak a little bit about how that might speed up the process for approvals?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: I will agree with comments made by other panellists that embedded in the bill is a regulation around priorities. We've offered our opinion as to what those priorities should be in our top five asks. We believe that will achieve alignment. We need a cultural change here. Any large organization, if they don't have the culture that supports the direction, is going to fail. There's an old saying: Culture kills strategy. We believe, by establishing those priorities and setting goals to increase approvals, by incenting municipalities to do so—I will come back to a question from one of your colleagues. We believe that municipalities that improve delivery of housing should have incentives provided to them to build infrastructure, to digitize processes, to look for ways to stop some of the bureaucracy that is currently undertaken.

I believe this bill will help us align behind the goals. I believe that it will create a culture of change within municipalities, and I believe it will provide the mayors with a platform to support that change that we need.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Being that the city of Toronto, obviously, is your area of expertise and a major part of the bill, do you have any stories or cautionary tales of good home building that was delayed because of bureaucratic processes at the city of Toronto?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: The overarching 10 to 11 years that we've talked about and the lack of ability to get the process through—I think there are challenges right now within the city of Toronto as it relates to planning staff and the provision of planning staff in order to approve those. This bill would help to potentially reallocate resources. I agree with the question from your colleague that the planning fees support the development staff. That is not a challenge that we have—it's just ensuring that we have effectiveness and accountability around the work that's being done.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I'll share my time with Ms. Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to all the witnesses for your presentations.

I am going to direct my question to Dave Wilkes. Whereas MPP McGregor discussed the supply issue, I'm going to focus my question on delays. I'm going to be brief.

You talked about smart prosperity issues and the five-point plan, and giving them more power to deal with transportation issues, which is a very significant issue in my riding. You also talked about the delays, which is key in housing. I just want to go through that.

You described a one-month delay as a rise in the housing price of \$3,000, for a home—and in a new condo, \$1,000. Correct?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: It's \$2,000 for a new condo.

Ms. Laura Smith: When you consider that—and I'm going to loop my question around and I'm going to make this GTA, because we're both GTA-specific. I apologize, for other jurisdictions. When you compare our cities with Chicago or London, what does that lead us to if no action is taken?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: I think ultimately we will continue to have affordability challenges, and given the engine of growth that the GTA is and the role that the city of Toronto plays, it will affect our competitiveness. We all compete on a global scale. So I think that is the ultimate consequence we have.

I'm quite hopeful, because as we head into the municipal elections on October 24, we've seen the mayor of Toronto put forward a plan that he believes will speed up and address some of those issues. That's, in my mind, part of the outcome of this bill—it provides that platform for the mayor. It provides the platform to create the necessary change. I won't comment on his specific proposals, but he's talking about addressing some of the challenges that we've had.

I always like to quote Einstein—and I get in trouble for doing so because I'm not as smart as he: The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome. We cannot do the same thing, because we need many more houses than this industry has been building,

and we have a responsibility to deliver that for affordability and competitiveness reasons.

So I believe, MPP Smith, that we're already seeing the beginning of changes that we need to compete with the cities that you mentioned, on a North American basis.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: We talked about the powers of mayors. Do you think that the council's powers will be in any way infringed upon?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: I think that councillors have a very strong bully pulpit, that they do represent within the city of Toronto a constituency that's important. So, no, I don't think so. I think what it will do is balance. We do need to ensure that we are taking hard decisions to deliver future housing. I think that this bill will provide that forum to ensure that those voices that are not currently heard, those voices that do not support change—this will provide a platform for that, and I think it would actually add up to a more democratic system than a less one.

Ms. Laura Smith: I have no further questions.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you to all the presenters this morning.

I will just give a couple of reminders here. The deadline for written submissions is 7 p.m. today, Monday, August 29. Also, we've had a cancellation in the 4 p.m. presentations this afternoon from the Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario, so we will move the Compass Refugee Centre up to the 4 p.m. time slot.

The committee is now adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon. Thank you, everyone.

The committee recessed from 1002 to 1300.

ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES
OF ONTARIO
RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION
COUNCIL OF ONTARIO
ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS
INSTITUTE

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to resume public hearings on Bill 3, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to special powers and duties of heads of council.

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

I will now call on the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to begin their seven-minute presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and then you may begin. There's a split, I think, among all the parties. Some are here, and some are on the video in front of you. Please start.

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon, everyone. My name is Brian Rosborough. I am the executive director of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I'm joined virtually by my

colleague Craig Reid, a senior adviser with the association. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022. Craig and I are here on behalf of the AMO board of directors.

By way of context, Ontario's 444 municipalities provide critical services to our residents and businesses, playing a vital role in the provincial economy. Ontario municipalities own nearly half a trillion dollars in public infrastructure and invest more than \$50 billion each year in the provincial economy. With the financial support of the provincial and federal governments, municipalities played a key role in keeping this province running throughout the pandemic, providing essential services and protecting the economy.

Housing affordability is a major issue for Ontario, with the price of housing rising significantly in recent years for many, many complex reasons. Municipalities in this province have been consistently and steadfastly committed to economic growth, the development of complete communities, and improved access to affordable housing. Municipalities recognize the important role they play in an extremely complex housing market; namely, in approving development consistent with provincial policies, in ensuring that adequate physical and social infrastructure is in place to ensure both the social and economic success of new development and to represent the public interest.

Municipalities are committed to doing their part to support growth and economic development in Ontario. They're open to advances in public policy that redefine their responsibilities and tools in a framework that acknowledges the responsibilities of the many other players in the fields of housing development, housing affordability and the creation of sustainable, vibrant, accessible and diverse communities.

When AMO's board met recently in Ottawa at the start of the AMO conference—and thank you to those of you who attended—they took the opportunity to discuss Bill 3. Understandably, the discussion was based on limited information and without the benefit of research or any real understanding of the views of AMO members broadly. Consequently, the board was not in a position to gauge support for the bill among its membership or to evaluate the provisions or the merits of the bill. So it's fair to say that the AMO board does not have a position on Bill 3 in general. However, the board asked me to deliver a strong message to this committee on the bill on three important matters.

First, as the government considers how it may expand the new provisions in the Municipal Act to include additional municipalities, it must engage in broad consultation with the public and with both professional and political municipal organizations, including AMO.

Second, the AMO board has taken note of the strong concerns expressed by municipal public administrators regarding the proposed provisions of the Municipal Act that would allow a mayor to unilaterally hire and fire a chief administrative officer, and it urges this committee to give careful consideration to those concerns as it proceeds.

Third and finally, the AMO board finds that the proposed changes to the Municipal Act which would allow a mayor to unilaterally hire and fire department heads and to reorganize a municipality's public administration are at odds with established good practices of both private and public sector governance and administration, and should be removed from the bill.

That concludes my comments. I thank you for your time.

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

We'll now hear from the Residential Construction Council of Ontario. Please state your name before you begin and give us some indication who's going to begin.

Ms. Amina Dibe: Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy. My name is Amina Dibe. I am the manager of government and stakeholder relations at RESCON, and I'm joined by my colleague Richard Lyall, who is the president of RESCON. Thank you for providing us with time to comment on Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.

RESCON represent buildings of all forms of high-rise, mid-rise and low-rise housing in the province.

RESCON commends the government for their ongoing commitment to seriously addressing housing supply and affordability with a series of new initiatives. We commend all provincial parties and levels of government for supporting the 1.5 million housing goal. The challenge lies in finding ways to fulfill the vision and turning the talk into action and dealing with both new and old challenges such as antiquated zoning, NIMBYism, supply chain bottlenecks and an inflation-driven market correction. The fact is, thousands are suffering. It is real, unnecessary and primarily a self-inflicted systemic wound.

The 1.5 million goal essentially requires that we double the amount of housing we produce over the next 10 years. There are real opportunities for improvement, and the fact is that Canada has not been at the forefront of systemic housing innovation, which is clear from international rankings. Canada ranks 34th out of 35 OECD countries in the length of time it takes to get a general construction project approved. We rank 64th out of 190 by the World Bank on construction permitting. We also have the highest amount of immigration amongst G7 countries per capita but the lowest housing supply and highest housing costs. The largest supply caps are in BC and Ontario, where all forms of housing types, including market and purpose-built rentals, are direly needed.

We are behind many jurisdictions on BIM, GHG-friendly wood building, as well as modernization and digitizing of our approvals process. These are areas where we could be leaders, and yet we remain a laggard. We have apparent breakthroughs in zoning and planning when they, in reality, simply mark our catching up to more advanced jurisdictions.

I'll now turn it over to Richard, who is here with us virtually.

Mr. Richard Lyall: Good morning. Positive steps have been made to develop solutions to housing supply and

removing red tape, including the launch of the Housing Affordability Task Force, the release of the report and 55 recommendations; the passage of the More Homes, More Choice Act and the More Homes for Everyone Act; as well as needed MZOs.

We are supportive of Bill 3, Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, as it is another piece of the puzzle addressing the housing supply and affordability crisis. Again, this has been considered before and is already a feature in other leading cities. RESCON is hopeful it will end city hall approvals gridlock by giving mayors in Toronto and Ottawa needed power to veto bylaws approved by council if they interfere with the provincial mandate to build 1.5 million homes over the next decade.

RESCON would like to see strong-mayor powers extended to all municipalities across Ontario, as the housing supply and affordability crisis is not just limited to Toronto and Ottawa. The state of our housing supply requires systemic change. Many of these systemic barriers lie within municipal zoning restrictions, red tape, and substandard departmental programs and practices. The ability for mayors who are publicly seen as responsible to choose major municipal department heads and reorganize is vital for command and control, a shared vision and effective policy implementation according to clearly articulated objectives.

RESCON believes Bill 3 also provides the necessary checks and balances in place by ensuring that any vetoed vote must be justified with written reasons, and that a veto can be overwritten by a two-thirds majority vote by council members.

Bill 3 will allow for mayors to propose budgets, which provides greater opportunity to ensure housing is a prime focus. Also critical is the power for mayors to appoint chairs and vice-chairs of committees and local boards and establish new departments and committees.

For example, earlier this spring, the Toronto Preservation Board approved a plan for 225 buildings along subway-served Danforth Avenue to be added to the Heritage Register, blocking them from likely redevelopment. Bill 3 has the potential to prevent abuses of heritage registries, as we see that happening.

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Again, the strong-mayor model has been discussed ad nauseam in the past and has been tried and tested in other world-class cities: Paris, London, New York, Chicago. Indeed, some jurisdictions have simply uploaded planning authorities to higher-tiered government bodies, with great success. The German and Japanese models are noteworthy here.

Toronto's world-class city development and aspirations are threatened by the obvious need for more housing. And, let's not forget, Toronto is the economic engine of Ontario and indeed Canada.

To conclude, the housing supply situation is dire, with over 1.5 million units needed in Ontario alone. Systemic improvements are vital to increasing housing supply. Bill 3 will help streamline decision-making, reduce delays—now even more critical, with inflation—facilitate the

development of missing-middle housing and address discriminatory exclusionary zoning practices and policies. Moreover, the bill could spur construction and approvals on transit corridors and stations as well as needed supporting infrastructure and the implementation of the remaining 55 Housing Affordability Task Force recommendations. The recommendations will also get housing built faster.

RESCON is looking forward to working with the Housing Supply Action Plan Implementation Team and the effect of implementation.

I thank you for your time today and would be happy to field any questions.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's one more presenter: the Ontario Professional Planners Institute.

Ms. Susan Wiggins: Thank you, Madam Chair, and hello to all of the committee members today. My name is Susan Wiggins. I'm the executive director for the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, better known as OPPI. I'm joined today virtually by my colleague OPPI member Michelle Banfield, director of development services for the city of Barrie.

A little bit about OPPI, the professional institute and regulator of professional planners in the province of Ontario: We represent over 4,700 members who work across the planning spectrum. A significant number of our members work in planning departments of Ontario's municipalities. Additionally, members work for consulting firms, provincial government, federal government, private developers, agencies, and academic institutions.

OPPI has the mandate to grant the registered professional planner, or RPP, designation. We govern the rights and responsibilities of our members, and we set academic experience and examination requirements for membership and rights to the title of RPP.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to be with you today to provide comments as the committee studies Bill 3, Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.

To begin, I want to let you know that OPPI supports the government's policy objective to address housing supply and affordability in the province. It is no secret that housing prices are increasingly out of reach for many and rents continue to rise at a pace higher than incomes, and the housing challenge is complex, with multiple dimensions that involve all orders of government.

As the organization representing professional planners, OPPI's focus is on land use planning and its role in the housing policy conversation. We have developed OPPI's top 10 housing supply and affordability recommendations that include things such as creating a chief planner of Ontario as an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly; promoting new Planning Act tools that streamline processes—as an example, a community planning permit system that brings multiple processes together in one streamlined system; and leveraging RPPs to expedite decision-making. We have provided you with a copy of our top 10 in advance and would be pleased to provide members, on an independent basis, a detailed briefing on any or all of the recommendations included.

Let's move on to our comments on the proposed Bill 3, Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act. Bill 3 proposes measures to strengthen authority conveyed to the head of council in the city of Toronto and the city of Ottawa. The bill moves towards more of an executive authority model, as mentioned by Richard, taken on by other countries in the world.

OPPI does not oppose the concept of a strong-mayor system for large municipalities in Ontario. It has been tried and true in those other jurisdictions. It can have benefits when it comes to more streamlined decision-making, and it ensures that accountability and responsibility for city-wide matters are in the right place. But that goes hand in hand with a good governance model, as we all know. We note two items related to good governance that we're pleased to see included in the bill: first, that there is a veto power within the bill, and secondly, that the mayor has the right and should require a city staff member to undertake research to perform the duties or exercise powers under the bill. Given that the act specifically mentions that this new power is related to the Planning Act and provincial priorities, we will focus our comments on the municipal planning department and the ability of a mayor to make decisions related to the hiring of a chief planner.

Currently, there is a separation between the mayor and the head of the planning department. There's often a chief administrative officer or a city manager who reports to council and is responsible for selecting senior management, including a chief planner. This layer of separation avoids a sense of obligation and allows the chief planner to provide his or her independent advice on the planning matter of the day. This independence often serves to benefit more housing supply in certain communities. It allows elected officials, including mayors, to defend politically challenging projects by saying, "The chief planner has deemed the project to align with all of our policies and plans." That opinion of the chief planner is a professional opinion from highly trained professional planners and is based on data-gathering and research, as cited in the legislation.

The heads of planning in both Ottawa and Toronto are registered professional planners, RPPs, and as such are bound by a professional code of conduct that requires recommendations in the public interest. If a mayor is seen to have direct control over the hiring and firing of the chief planner, it would remove the important separation between these two roles.

OPPI is concerned that allowing a mayor to hire and fire the head of a planning department may actually be to the detriment of building more housing in the province. It may create more political pressure on the mayor from factions who may not support intensification where policies direct it. We therefore recommend that the chief planner be included in the list of exempt persons under the act.

In closing, OPPI is not opposed to the concept of this new system. Many of the proposals in Bill 3 could have merit. However, we are concerned about granting the mayor the ability to directly hire or fire—

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

Ms. Susan Wiggins: —the head of the planning department. It may actually result in less housing being built due to increased political pressure from opposing groups on the office of the mayor.

OPPI appreciates the opportunity to present our comments today. Thank you for your time. We would be pleased to take any questions.

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

Now we'll begin with the round of questions, starting with the official opposition, then we'll follow up with the independent and then the government. MPP Burch.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to all the presenters for appearing this afternoon. We really appreciate it.

I want to start with some questions for AMO.

First of all, thank you for a great conference—especially the first one back, and in an election year. I think it went very well. Thanks for all the hard work you and all of your staff did with that.

I want to address a few issues—and when you summed up your concerns, it was interesting, because I had the exact same three in the exact same order.

I'm going to ask you, first of all, about consultation. As you're aware, the strong-mayor bill was never mentioned in the entire last term of council. It never came up at the AMO convention. In the two major housing bills that the government came out with—nothing about this bill. In the Housing Affordability Task Force, strong mayors was never discussed. It was never discussed in the election. The big city mayors weren't consulted. The mayor of Ottawa said he found out in the media about the bill.

Was there any consultation at all with AMO prior to this bill coming out?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: There was no consultation with AMO, but we were briefed on the details of the bill, as you would expect, immediately before it was introduced.

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Mr. Jeff Burch: Would your members have preferred that the government consulted before coming out with a bill that so affects municipalities, especially in the middle of an election?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Well, at the moment it only affects two municipalities, and there are provisions in the bill that permit, by regulation, the minister expanding these provisions to other municipalities. When the AMO board deliberated on that, it thought it was important that there be additional consultation as the government considers how those regulatory powers are used and what are the criteria for expansion, and so on. Part of the board's position has been that as the government deliberates on expanding those powers under the authority of the bill, there should be both public consultation and consultation with municipal, professional and political organizations, including AMO.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Have you had an opportunity to canvass your membership in terms of what they think of the bill?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: We have not canvassed our membership, but I can tell you that in the discussion we had with our board of directors, there were mixed points of view. There were people on the board who thought it was a good idea, others who had reservations, and others who were truly open-minded and looking for a better understanding. But there was a real consensus that, as it's expanded, consultation should occur.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to turn to the discussion of the issue of hiring a CAO.

This bill seems to allow a mayor to unilaterally hire a CAO, and that really raised a lot of alarm bells for me, as a former councillor and budget chair, and also coming from Niagara, where, you're probably aware, there was a very significant Ombudsman decision on some hiring practices that happened in Niagara in 2018. As you said, these powers may be expanded to other municipal bodies. The chair basically hired the CAO they wanted behind closed doors and provided the candidate, during a hiring process, with other candidates' information, with information about the position and all kinds of inside information. So their candidate was hired, and that all happened through the chair's office. There was also a secret deal that the Ombudsman commented on, for a 36-month severance, which was somewhere around a million bucks of taxpayers' money. It was a real scandal in Niagara.

Paul Dubé, the Ombudsman, said, "The lack of fairness and transparency in the hiring process created controversy and distrust within the region and served to undermine ... confidence in local government." That's often what a lack of transparency does; it undermines public trust.

In your opinion and the opinion of your members and your board, is this a practice that you think is good governance, to have a mayor or a chair be able to—this is basically making what the Ombudsman warned against the norm. Is this a good governance practice?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Thank you for your question.

Currently, the chief administrative officer of a municipality is hired by the council collectively, reports to the council collectively, and can be removed by the council collectively. My board had a discussion about this as an element of Bill 3. It did not achieve consensus on the matter, with some people on the board thinking that the idea had merit, others expressing concern, others remaining open-minded to the possibility.

But my recommendation to the committee, as I said a moment ago, is that we have heard the opinion of our public administration professionals—I think you're hearing from some of those later today—and the consensus point of view from the board is that the committee should listen very carefully to those concerns to better appreciate what they may be and to give those concerns consideration as they proceed.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'll turn to Susan from OPPI. I thought you raised a really good point with respect to the hiring and firing of department heads. Certainly, in my experience as a city councillor—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Mr. Jeff Burch:—the planner often is the person who injects some objectivity into the decision and can also, as you said, provide a rationale for the mayor and council to justify decisions that are good planning but may not be popular in the community.

Isn't it problematic that a mayor could hire someone themselves without going through a planning committee? That's a subjective decision rather than having a proper governance process.

Ms. Susan Wiggins: Thank you for the question. Acknowledging that I am not a planner, I am going to defer to my colleague and OPPI member Michelle Banfield for a response.

Ms. Michelle Banfield: Through you, Chair: Absolutely, I think there is a concern with that, and I think you hit the nail on the head when you talked about the chief planner often being the unpopular voice in the room but recommending good decisions in the public interest.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's the end for the official opposition.

MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I will echo the comments about AMO. That was my first conference because, as you know, Toronto was never involved. It was enlightening, and I was amazed at how often climate change was mentioned—very impressive.

I only have four and a half minutes, so I'm going to be super quick—and super quick with you guys for your responses, if you don't mind.

This is to everyone who is deputing: How do we track that the 1.5 million homes are actually being built? Are there reports back? How do we know? Do we allocate a yearly amount? How do we do that?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: They can track using building permits. They can be tracked with MPAC data. I think tracking them won't be a difficult task.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And if the goals aren't achieved, what then? What should we do? Creative, outside-the-box ideas?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: I will say that AMO published a report earlier this year called the blueprint for housing affordability that has 91 recommendations in it. There are recommendations for industry, for the federal government, the provincial government and municipalities. It has a great number of recommendations that can affect our planning regime and investment in new technology and labour force development to make sure that we have the planners in place and others.

This is a very complex issue. There's a role for all parties involved to play. This is a remarkable jurisdiction with capable orders of government and an extremely sophisticated development industry. I think by working together, we can probably do a great deal to advance the supply of affordable housing in the province.

Ms. Susan Wiggins: I will just add to my colleague Brian's comments.

I think the key to getting to the goal is everybody working together. We are all working independently on recommendations and solutions as to how to get there.

Will we achieve the goal? It is aggressive, and it will take everybody together to always be thinking about how to get to that goal. I think always thinking about it is going to be important—not just setting the goal and saying, "Okay, let's work together and make it happen," but always looking to others, looking among ourselves, and working together to try to continue to think about innovative ways to get there.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What do you think about reporting back regularly, publicly, for transparency? Do you think that's a good idea?

Ms. Susan Wiggins: Absolutely. I do think it's a good idea.

Ms. Amina Dibe: I'll defer to Richard, who's on the phone, but again, echoing what Susan said, working together is super important. I think there are recommendations in the Housing Affordability Task Force report which have to do with reporting back and greater accountability. I think if those recommendations are implemented, that will certainly help with the 1.5-million-home goal.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's just one minute left.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My last question is, do you find it puzzling that we're only speaking about Toronto and Ottawa when we're in such a severe housing crisis? Why not Brampton, Mississauga, Hamilton, Barrie—all municipalities? If we're serious about getting shovels in the ground, getting these affordable homes built—why not every municipality?

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Mr. Richard Lyall: It's worth remembering that right now we're on track to build about half of the housing we need over the next 10 years, so we have an incredible challenge ahead of us. I would concur with the AMO comment that working together etc., I think we can do this and report back and all of those things on it. But we have a massive challenge ahead of us. We have to try new things, and we have to move quickly. Let's not forget—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: But my question is, why not other municipalities? Why just Toronto and Ottawa right now?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Oh, I agree with that comment. I think, and it's our position—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry. Our time is up.

Before we start the government's round, we'll just remind the questioners to direct the questions specifically. It might just save time and keep things flowing faster.

I'll turn to the government and MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: This is a question for AMO. Thank you for your feedback on Bill 3.

You may be aware that our partnership is very imperative to the proposal of putting forward Bill 3. In the proposed legislation, I think we are aware that there are several accountability and transparency requirements—instead of, as some people are saying, it's behind the door. That includes requirements for mayors to provide written documents when using any of these new powers and new rules in the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.

Do you have any comments on these accountability and transparency requirements?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: We've really limited our comments to three aspects of the bill, which I have enumerated and provided in a letter. Apart from that, our organization, which deliberated on the bill, did not form opinions on specific aspects of the legislation.

Mr. Billy Pang: When addressing the housing crisis, it requires collaboration and coordination of all levels of government. What are your views on these issues, and how could this be achieved?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Thank you for the question.

Madam Chair, as I noted earlier, we have a set of 91 recommendations that we published earlier in the year related to housing affordability in general, which include quite a number of recommendations related to housing supply and working with our colleagues at OPPI and others to take a look at processes—of streamlining processes, of digitization, of investing in technology to streamline processes in workforce development related to ensuring that we have a sufficient number of planners in place. I won't enumerate all of them because there are 91 of them, but there are recommendations there for federal government, provincial government, municipal government, for the housing industry, all of which I think lend themselves to a framework of more affordable housing in Ontario.

Mr. Billy Pang: The rest of the time is for MPP McGregor.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks to all the witnesses for coming, in person or virtually.

Congratulations on the AMO conference; it was actually my first time getting to attend one in person. I was certainly on a different side of it this time. It was really, really well done. I know my municipalities and my riding appreciated the hard work.

My question is for the residential construction association. As you're aware, 1.5 million homes was the commitment from this government, from this party—I think echoed by the other parties—in the last election. Could you draw the tie between housing supply and housing affordability? If we get 1.5 million homes in the next 10 years, what outcome do we expect to arise from that? That's for Richard or Amina.

Mr. Richard Lyall: I'll take that question, and it's a very good one.

The 1.5 million number is not only supported by all, but it has also been peer-reviewed, so it's real. There are some considerable challenges in reaching that objective—and certainly a portion of that would have to include deeply affordable housing. There remain some challenges with respect to how we get there in terms of what the contribution of the federal and provincial and municipal governments will be in that regard. That has yet to really be sorted out. But we expect that there would be a mix in there, because affordability is really a question of—it lies on a continuum, a spectrum. For some people, housing is quite affordable, although that has been really tested these

days. And then we've got people in our world who, through no fault of their own, can't afford anything related to housing. As a caring, sharing society, we have to take all of those things into consideration.

The task force report mentioned that there were some outstanding issues there that have to be sorted out. We're working on those, and we'll be coming forward with some recommendations in terms of how that can be met.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I couldn't agree more. Certainly, as a millennial Canadian—this is a generational challenge facing our country.

We want to make sure that we're getting approvals done faster. It's my understanding that every month of delay on approvals actually has a dollar figure attached to that and increases the price of a project. Richard, could you walk us through what that looks like and the cost of delays when it comes to approving?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Well, it all depends on what kind of unit—but as you know, time is money. So when you have unnecessary delays caused by these chicken-and-egg games, there's a domino effect in all this. If the approval of one thing is waiting for an approval of another thing and it's not well coordinated, then we have a problem. That can add up to thousands and tens of thousands per unit, which is borne, ultimately, by the new renter or the new homebuyer. In fact, it even impairs the ability to produce social housing, as well. That's why many of us at AMO and OPPI and others are engaged now, for example, in supporting the One Ontario initiative to modernize and digitize that process. It will give us data, it will give us accountability and transparency that's very badly needed, and—to another question—it will enable us to measure our progress as we work through these things. There are massive challenges here.

Mr. Graham McGregor: We've drawn the connection between supply and affordability. We've drawn the connection between faster approval times and getting more shovels in the ground.

In your opinion, Richard, will this bill increase housing supply in Ontario or will it decrease housing supply in Ontario?

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

Mr. Richard Lyall: This bill is another piece of solving the puzzle of the housing supply crisis that we have. By itself, it will not do that, but it will help in terms of having some kind of executive authority to cut through the fog, as it were.

Frankly, I don't know how a mayor can run a town if they don't have those people directly reporting to them, by the way. You've got the responsibility or the accountability, but you don't have the authority.

So I think this will help, yes. It's a step in the right direction. We're not going to get everything right here, but we need to act quickly on so many different fronts in order to get to that 1.5 million, because if we don't, we've got a much, much bigger problem. In fact, we've got a huge problem now.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Mr. Pang?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Seven seconds left.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Oh. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Now we'll go to the official opposition. MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, folks, for coming to depute today.

I would like to begin with the Residential Construction Council of Ontario. We're looking at a piece of legislation—as my colleagues in government were just saying, it has ambitious objectives. Just thinking about your own organization, which is pretty important in our province, bringing together people who build essential things—I get from your presentations that you're very excited about this legislation. But as you rallied that support to come here today—would it make sense to you to not consult your Ottawa members in arriving at your position? I'm going to assume that your Ottawa members were very much involved in homebuilding and arriving at the position you have today. Was that the case?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Well, things are happening very quickly, so we haven't really had—and I forget if it was AMO or OPPI—that chance to consult with everyone. But, generally speaking, in terms of trying new things and clearing the way towards getting housing built, pretty much everybody is on board with that. So, in principle, our members support the direction that we're going in.

Mr. Joel Harden: I hear you saying that, and that came across during the presentation, but what troubles me, as an Ottawa representative at this table, is that I can't find a person in our city who was consulted on this piece of legislation. As MPP Burch mentioned, our mayor found out about this in the media. Of all of the people presenting themselves in the mayoralty election right now, there's only one person in the whole field who has actually voiced some support for it.

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So I'm just going to say, I think it's probably agreed upon—folks here—we will have different points of view on things, but would it stand to reason, folks from Residential Construction Council of Ontario, that if you were to propose something internally, you'd want your Ottawa members to at least know about it first?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Well, we do consult with our members. We do have a newsletter. We do communicate with them all the time.

One of the problems that we've got right now and we've suffered from systemically is a bit of analysis paralysis. We need to move on this 1.5 million target. As I said, we're on track to build half of that number. That's 750,000 units of housing. The current system, on many levels, is not working as effectively as it could.

Mr. Joel Harden: I take your point, sir. My point that I'm trying to establish from you, just collegially—trying to understand where this legislation is going and how we can make informed decisions on it, because that is the work of these committees. We're supposed to be digging into the legislation. For the record, no one in our city was consulted about it. This is a piece of legislation that affects our city, as well as the city of Toronto. So I'm just flagging—because I take everybody to heart; you're

coming here in good faith, presenting on a point of view here.

I also just want to put to our friends at AMO something that I found interesting from Mayor Watson's comments on this matter. He actually asked, proactively, all candidates presenting for mayor in this election to commit to not utilize the powers of this legislation. What message do you think that sends—from an outgoing mayor, who is normally quieter, because it's the end of their mandate and they're getting ready for somebody new to come in? Is that atypical, in your opinion? Have you ever seen a mayor before, in the dying weeks of their mandate, contributing for as long as Mayor Watson has—for which he deserves credit—ask existing people running for office not to utilize powers given to it by the province of Ontario? Have you ever seen that before?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Not that I recall.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to pass it to MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to Susan Wiggins from OPPI.

If you could just clarify your comments about how having a mayoral appointment manage a planning department—you suggested that that could impact housing supply in a negative way, because the chief planner brings a voice of reason into the conversation. Could you elaborate on that piece for me?

Ms. Susan Wiggins: Currently, in the legislation, there is a group of exempt professions from the ability to hire and fire—so we're suggesting that the chief planner be among that group. In other words, there would be a separation between the mayor and the staff member. The planner would carry out their work and make their recommendation to council.

Ms. Jessica Bell: One thing that I found quite concerning about this legislation is—I have a lot of concerns about the mayor also having influence over who is the head of the TTC, who is the head of the TCHC, who is the head of the Toronto Public Library, because I also see those non-partisan, merit-based bureaucrats as providing a voice of reason into those conversations.

Another piece that I've read in the Star is about how many planning departments are short-staffed. In the case of the city of Toronto, there's a 13% vacancy rate because planners can't afford to live in the city of Toronto and work at the city because of the high cost of housing, and that vacancy rate is contributing to planning approvals being delayed and taking longer than they need to be. Is that something you have also heard in your association?

Ms. Susan Wiggins: Short answer, yes. There is a planning shortage in Ontario. We actually had a council meeting two weeks ago with the heads of the planning departments of all of the universities in Ontario to discuss the matter, to look at ways that we can resolve the situation. There is a hiring challenge right now. I was at the AMO conference, and that was in fact the conversation of the day. So we are working on strategies. We will work with our colleagues at AMO to think about different strategies. We will work with our planning program

directors. And we will hopefully work with the government to help us with aspects of our proposal that we'll be needing help with to get more—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Ms. Susan Wiggins:—planners into the system.

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a question to RESCON, and it's about the issue of the link between housing affordability and housing supply. There's no question that increasing housing supply can impact housing affordability in the long term. It's going to take 10 to 15 years for us to address the housing shortage.

What measures are you publicly willing to support that would bring down the cost of housing, make housing affordable in the next five years? Inclusionary zoning? Stronger rent control? Are there measures that your association is willing to get behind?

Mr. Richard Lyall: First of all, yes, there are quite a few things that we're working on to hit the objectives. We do have skilled trades supply issues, and innovation is also a huge area. But the thing is that—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry. There's no more time left to answer that. Maybe you'll pick it up again.

I'll now turn to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm putting you on the spot again, Richard and Amina: 1.5 million homes in the next 10 years is a very lofty goal, and I would just ask if you could define the types of homes you think will solve the housing crisis—and be specific in your list.

Mr. Richard Lyall: One of the problems—and it has been a problem that has been decades in the making—is that we don't have sufficient choice in housing. Our system has relegated development to certain areas—generally speaking; I don't want to overplay that one.

But we do need the high-rise housing. We do need the missing middle, which is still missing. We do need the redevelopments along major corridors and avenues that are served by mass transit and changes related to that—that's where you get into as-of-right zoning. And we do need to go back and look at, for example—there was a time when we had a purpose-built rental housing boom in Ontario, and it ended. We need to look at what it was that we did then to enable that to happen, because we have a dramatic shortage of purpose-built rental housing.

In fact, in the US right now, there's a boom in multi-family purpose-built rental housing, even with the market correction, whereas we're not following that, and that's because we have these problems.

And things like the inclusionary zoning that has been introduced—it's not going to work, right? And there are other things that won't work effectively, because they just don't work with the market. There's really insufficient consultation, to a certain extent, with the industry.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So what about—I'm going to list some, because when you say “missing middle,” you're not getting into specifics. I want specifics, please.

Co-op housing—do you think that would be beneficial?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Oh, yes. I think co-op housing is very good. It has its place. All forms of housing have their place.

In terms of missing middle, I'm thinking of—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Multi-residential rooming houses?

Mr. Richard Lyall: I support rooming houses. They play an important role and—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Triplexes? Duplexes? Quadplexes?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Everything.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Laneway suites? Garden suites?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Stacked towns? Affordable rentals?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So you're thinking along the lines that the single-family detached home—building those and only those is not going to address the housing issue?

Mr. Richard Lyall: No.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: We need everything?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Everything everywhere?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What if we have a NIMBY mayor and we've given the mayor these extra powers, and they are against rooming houses and garden suites? What to do then?

Mr. Richard Lyall: I think that's where the province would have to look at that situation carefully and possibly take action, if we had those continued barriers to what is needed.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Any thoughts on what to do about vacant homes—how to get an inventory of them and how to deal with those?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There is just about one minute left.

Mr. Richard Lyall: I think the vacant homes situation has been proven to be overblown. We do have the empty-bedroom situation, but that problem lies with the fact that you do have, for example, boomers who really don't have anywhere to go, because we're not building that mid-rise housing and the missing middle housing that would enable them to actually have an option there—and they don't, so they're staying in place. They can choose to do that for good reasons, but I think those barriers are preventing that transition from boomers to millennials.

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Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, I have a home in my neighbourhood that has been empty for 30 years—a four-bedroom home, a beautiful home. The owners live elsewhere. That's right across Toronto. So I would argue with you that it's not overblown, but that will be for another day.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to all the presenters for being here and for being witnesses.

I'll start off by asking my question to Richard and Amina from the Residential Construction Council of Ontario.

It's clear that we need more housing supply—there is a demand for it—and there is a correlation between the shortage of labourers, especially in the skilled trades. We want to tackle that in order to increase the supply of houses.

Can either one of you talk a bit about the relationship between, particularly, the labour and skilled trades shortage and the housing supply?

Ms. Amina Dibe: If there aren't enough people to build the houses, then there aren't going to be enough houses, so there's a direct correlation.

I think promotion of the skilled trades to young people is improving, but parents also need to be involved.

At RESCON, we've been advocating to the federal government that the provincial minister responsible for immigration be granted more authority to make immigration decisions based on labour market need as it relates to the OINP and residential, specifically—it's mostly the voluntary trades, which aren't formally recognized.

It's a very specific way that you get into the voluntary trades, and mostly you're trained directly by employers. So that's a bit challenging in terms of barriers.

But I think there certainly have been many improvements on the labour supply and getting more young people into the skilled trades.

I'll turn it over to Richard to add.

Mr. Richard Lyall: I was just going to say that there's very good research by the Royal Bank, for example, showing that the percentage of immigrants to Canada who should have skilled trades is deficient, but we're working on that. Minister McNaughton has been exemplary in his promotion of the skilled trades and certain changes—and Minister Dunlop—so we're making progress there.

I'll point out, too, that in the last year alone we had a 20% increase in starts, which the industry was able to handle. That's impressive. That doesn't mean to say that the challenges coming forward aren't great—but I'm confident that the industry can rise to the occasion and meet those challenges.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My next question is to AMO.

First of all, congratulations on another successful AMO conference. We had a lot of amazing feedback from our caucus members about the delegations representing their municipalities, as well as from the ministry side.

When it comes to the housing crisis, we all know we need attention and a full commitment from all different levels of government. You work with municipalities, and we, as a government, are ready to partner with all levels of government to implement Bill 3.

Can you please elaborate on why it's important and how your organization can work with our government in order to facilitate other governments to tackle this issue? What are your views on working with a growing number of municipalities who are shovel-ready and committed to growth? What are your views on including them, moving forward, in the future?

Mr. Brian Rosborough: Thank you for the question.

There's a great deal that we can do as an association, working with our members, in terms of precipitating best practices around modernization of processes, around the supply of planners, and working with the province on that.

In fact, a number of the recommendations that Amina just enumerated are AMO recommendations as well—things like our conference, for example. We demonstrate to our member municipalities innovations in planning and approvals that are possible. We're working with MPAC around improving digital approvals. We want to make sure that our members have access to the best possible technology and knowledge related to streamlining approvals and keeping it going.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My next question goes to Susan.

First of all, thank you for the presentation, Susan. I was keenly listening to your presentation. You talked about various things, including the powers to hire and fire.

Could you please elaborate on what other measures you support that can improve the current model so that we can improve the housing supply in Ottawa and Toronto? As I said previously, we want to work with Toronto and Ottawa to get this moving. At the same time, we want to partner with all organizations to make sure that we have an understanding to see how we can implement your feedback. That's why I want you to elaborate and say what the other opportunities are that we can incorporate.

Ms. Susan Wiggins: What I would do is point to our top 10 recommendations and some of the items that we've included in there to improve the efficiency of the planning process.

One thing that was included in Bill 109, for example, was delegating site plan approval to the chief planner in the municipality. So we had some increased delegated authority put forward in the last red tape bill—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Ms. Susan Wiggins: —in Bill 109, and we are advocating for further delegated authority. These are routine Planning Act matters that have already been approved under the official plan of the municipality, but they're more technical in nature, and giving them to the planning staff increases the efficiency by anywhere from two to six months, in terms of time frames.

There is a recommendation to increase knowledge of and funding for the implementation of a community planning permit system, which, again, brings multiple Planning Act processes into one planning act. There are good case studies that we're currently packaging up for people's awareness about what a community planning permit system is and how it can effectively improve the efficiencies and timelines.

Another one would be the planning justification report, which is the final report that's submitted with an application—having an RPP sign off on that planning justification report to ensure that it is a complete application, so not—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. That's all the time we have.

Thank you to the presenters for coming today. We are just going to get ready for the next round of three, so I'll let you have time to exit, those who are here in person—and thank you to those joining us virtually.

ONTARIO REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION
ONTARIO'S BIG CITY MAYORS
TORONTO REGION BOARD OF TRADE

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'd now like to welcome the Ontario Real Estate Association, Ontario's Big City Mayors, and the Toronto Region Board of Trade. We have a combination, again, of in-person and virtual presenters.

For the presenters: If you would state your name prior to beginning speaking, that would be appreciated. You have seven minutes to present.

I would ask the Ontario Real Estate Association to please begin.

1400

Mr. Wasim Jarrah: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Wasim Jarrah. I'm the vice-chair of the Ontario Real Estate Association, or OREA, government relations committee. Joining me in your chamber right now is Matthew Thornton, OREA's vice-president of public affairs and communications. It's our pleasure to be here to support Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.

Despite a changing real estate market, Ontario continues to face a housing supply shortage and average home prices that are out of reach for young families. In July, the average-priced home in Ontario was over \$830,000, which is a 40% increase from pre-pandemic levels. Home prices in major markets like Toronto are still averaging over \$1 million, and first-time homebuyers are struggling to get into the market. To make matters even more challenging, Ontarians are feeling an increased financial strain on everyday living expenses. Inflation hit 7.9% in July, making things like driving to work and feeding a family more expensive.

Although we've generally seen home prices begin to level out, the combination of high inflation, high interest rates, and salaries that are not keeping pace with the increased cost of living has created an environment where it's much harder than ever to save for that down payment on a new home. These factors are pushing the dream of home ownership further and further away for young families.

Housing analysts have long been pointing to the lack of housing supply as the main driver of inflated prices in our province, and that is why we're pleased to see Bill 3

moving forward. To fix the housing affordability crisis, Ontario needs to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years, and Bill 3 is a good step in the right direction in achieving that goal. Bill 3 will cut red tape and speed up local planning processes by giving municipal leaders new tools and powers to help reduce timelines for development. It will also provide more autonomy to local mayors to better address local barriers to increasing housing supply in Toronto and Ottawa. For example, Bill 3 will allow mayors to have a greater say on how planning decisions will be made, and increased mayoral control will help prevent votes against desperately needed housing-related projects occurring at council. Specifically, mayors will be able to veto zoning bylaws that restrict housing supply, or could approve housing-development projects more quickly.

Further, Bill 3 will contribute to the government's goal of building 1.5 million new homes over the next decade by ensuring that municipalities can allow for the adjustment of development plans and to create gentle density as needed. These new municipal powers will go a long way in addressing affordability, getting more shovels in the ground, incentivizing developers, and building Ontario's larger cities.

While OREA welcomes Bill 3, cities continue to face challenges from NIMBY groups trying to put an end to new development in urban areas. In fact, in many neighbourhoods across Ontario, small but vocal groups of residents have dominated municipal housing conversations, putting their own self-interests ahead of affordable homes for millennials, new Canadians, marginalized communities, particularly in larger cities like Toronto and Ottawa. What's worse, the reasons NIMBY groups oppose development, such as to preserve the historic character of an area, can be window dressing for keeping other communities and people from diverse backgrounds out of their neighbourhoods. This empowerment of exclusionary NIMBY forces comes not only at the cost of the dream of home ownership for young families, but it also runs counter to the inclusive fabric which has helped build our great country.

To fix this problem, Ontario needs to put an end to exclusionary single-family zoning rules in urban high-demand areas. Right now, it boggles the mind that in the busiest areas of Ontario's largest cities, it is often illegal to convert a single-family home into a townhome, duplex, triplex or fourplex without a zoning bylaw change. Meanwhile, a wealthy homeowner or investor can turn a small bungalow into a sprawling single-family mansion.

To rezone a property under Ontario's current rules, a builder must apply to change municipal bylaws, which drastically delays much-needed projects from being built and adds thousands of dollars in cost. These factors deter builders from creating the missing middle housing we desperately need, to give Ontario families more options and choice in the market.

By allowing single-family lots to be turned into two- or three-storey townhomes, the government would facilitate new housing in desirable neighbourhoods that have been

historically out of reach for newcomers, millennials and first-time buyers.

So while Bill 3 is a great first step, OREA believes that there is much more work to do. The province should be using the Planning Act to implement as-of-right zoning in Ontario's highest-demand urban neighbourhoods. This change would allow the seamless and legal development of gentle density beside existing housing and close to transit stations, without unnecessary and lengthy case-by-case approvals. Ending exclusionary zoning is one strategy that can immediately provide housing types suited to the needs of residents, whether they be renters, families taking a multi-generational approach to living, or those looking to enter the market.

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

Mr. Wasim Jarrah: Lastly, it is worth noting that this proposal was one of the key recommendations that came from the Housing Affordability Task Force report that was presented to Minister Clark earlier this year.

In closing, Ontario realtors are pleased to see that the government of Ontario is empowering municipal decision-makers to improve and streamline the process. By eliminating outdated zoning rules across the province, Ontario can bring new life to existing neighbourhoods and strengthen communities right here across the province.

On behalf of our 90,000 member realtors, I would like to thank the Chair and members of this committee for your time today. I'm happy to take any questions you may have.

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

We will now go to our next presenter, Ontario's Big City Mayors. Please go ahead, Mayor Guthrie.

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for the opportunity to address the standing committee on Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022. I'm here speaking to you today as the chair of Ontario's Big City Mayors. Our caucus is made up of mayors from Ontario's 29 largest single- and lower-tier municipalities, collectively representing nearly 70% of the province of Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'll just get you to state your name, please, for the record.

Mr. Cam Guthrie: I'm Cam Guthrie, mayor of the city of Guelph and chair of the Ontario's Big City Mayors caucus.

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

Mr. Cam Guthrie: No problem. I've been called worse—so I hope that makes it into the Hansard.

Addressing housing affordability is one of Ontario's Big City Mayors' goals, as well, in our priorities. We share the government's commitment to the outcome of more housing supply, and we want to be part of the solution. In fact, municipalities are already prioritizing increased supply. Through work with our sector partners, we have seen housing starts hit record levels in Ontario, but we know more needs to be done. To have the impact required to reach our housing supply goals, we need strong cities. A strong-mayor system as a tool may help towards strengthening our cities and delivering on these priorities.

We understand that the proposed legislation is currently only going to apply to Toronto and Ottawa, the two largest Ontario's Big City Mayors municipalities, and that the plan is to eventually provide these powers or similar changes to other municipalities across the province.

Ontario's Big City Mayors, along with our municipal sector partners, are watching the rollout of this legislation—and the regulation, when created. We're watching it closely to better understand the impacts it may have on our cities.

Our membership has been raising questions about implementation and are working to identify areas of alignment, along with those where we may have some concerns—and not just from mayors, but also from the CAO administrative working group. However, we all agree that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the municipal sector.

Last week, in question period, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing emphasized how important it is to give mayors the tools they need to get it done, and we agree. Giving municipalities a range of tools to choose from so that we can select which ones make sense for our own cities is crucial to addressing housing affordability and supply. We have seen from your government how you have collaborated with the municipal sector in your previous term, and that is why we believe it's critical we are at the table, working with you on this to try to get it right.

We also see this as an opportunity to work collaboratively on other related priorities, such as OLT reform, NIMBYism, additional powers to address additional responsibilities—as property taxes were never designed for the pressures we currently face, as cities need the right tools to do the jobs we are being asked to do—and on ways to also align municipal planning with the provincial planning processes and approval processes for government ministries, like conservation authorities, funding programs or other provincial reviews. When not aligned, these are the pieces that take the most time away from getting shovels in the ground.

1410

I would also like to point out that municipal governments are built on our professional public service. These dedicated individuals also serve the public every single day. We also have concerns that such a tool does not diminish the critical independence of our professional public service—something we hope will be considered as the details of the implementation continue to be developed.

Ontario's Big City Mayors echo Minister Clark's statement that there is no silver bullet to solving the housing crisis. But by working together, we can make both mayors and cities stronger, resulting in an increase in housing options that are affordable for all of Ontario. We look forward to these necessary conversations and request further consultation with the municipal sector to be part of the government's process on the continued rollout of, or any future amendments to, Bill 3.

Thank you for your time.

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

We'll now go to the Toronto Region Board of Trade. Please state your name before you begin.

Ms. Roselle Martino: I'm Roselle Martino. I'm the vice-president of public policy at the Toronto Region Board of Trade. Thanks very much for the opportunity to address the committee.

It's nice to see you, Mayor Guthrie—although virtually. It's too bad I couldn't see you in person.

On behalf of the 11,500 members, the Toronto Region Board of Trade welcomes government action to provide stronger mayor powers, starting with Toronto and Ottawa.

Toronto, North America's third-largest city, faces numerous, urgent, city-wide challenges, from housing, land use, transit, transportation, budget, economic development, and climate.

The board respects and applauds the work of municipal councillors in Toronto, the region and across the province, and we work very closely with many municipal councillors across the province and in the Toronto region. We know they're doing their utmost to represent the constituents of the wards in which they're elected.

The mayor, however, is elected on a city-wide mandate, and he or she needs the tools and the apparatus to execute this mandate effectively and efficiently. The mayor's authority and responsibilities need to match public expectations and ensure council can focus on city-wide concerns. Effective, timely solutions require a city chief executive with clear authority to set an agenda, appoint senior city staff, and bring forward policy solutions to council with greater influence over outcomes.

The current system, as we see it, reduces the mayor's leverage to advance important, city-wide priorities. The need for bold decision-making and urgent action is something the board of trade has heard about from the business community consistently over many years. From a business perspective, the Toronto region functions as an economic hub for our province and country. Economic growth requires investment, and investment is catalyzed by competitiveness.

The globally competitive landscape continues to evolve because of the pandemic. Therefore, it is imperative that our local governments, which truly are key pillars in our economic prosperity, establish a structure that does not stifle growth and competitiveness—rather, maintain a governance structure that encourages strategic, effective decision-making, focused on advancing city-wide objectives strategically, and positioning Toronto and other cities in our province as places to work, live and invest.

The board encourages appropriate consultation on regulation details and notes the following for consideration. Enhancement of the mayor's powers can come in three key areas:

- the power to propose; the ability for the mayor to direct city staff to formally develop a budget for debate, rather than starting with the staff-recommended budget that is amended by budget committee and city council;

- the power to appoint; the mayor has the power to appoint or dismiss the city manager and city executives; and

- the power to oversee agencies, boards and commissions, such as CreateTO, TTC, Toronto Hydro etc. They could potentially report directly to the mayor rather than to city council.

Again, these are just suggestions for consideration, and we do recommend appropriate consultation.

The government's priority of enhancing mayoral powers to facilitate the construction of new housing is the right goal. We need more housing quickly to address the crisis that hampers the city's competitiveness, and my colleagues spoke about that very eloquently prior to my presentation.

The Toronto Region Board of Trade urges the province to consider extending strong-mayor powers to at least the following areas beyond housing: city budget; land use, which includes employment lands, transit and transportation; and economic development, culture and recreation.

In closing, there is great value in learning from the historic underpinning and practices of our municipalities and local governments—I've worked in local government for many years, so I can say that from first-hand experience. However, over the past two and a half years, the entire world has changed. I'm not being obtuse when I say that. Catapulting our city to a new era of sustainable economic prosperity requires new and different ways of doing things if we're going to compete on a globally competitive stage. Now is the time to act.

Thanks very much for your time.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much to all the presenters.

We will now go to questions, and I'll start with the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Burch.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to all the presenters for appearing this afternoon. We really appreciate your time.

I have a few questions. I want to start with Chair Guthrie from Ontario's Big City Mayors, and then I'll pass things on to my colleagues.

I want to start, Chair Guthrie, with the issue of consultation, because one of the things that we've been hearing, as the opposition—we hear from people who aren't happy, often, and one of the main complaints is the level of consultation around this bill. Let's face it: It wasn't mentioned in the last term of government; it wasn't mentioned in the two housing bills the government proposed or the Housing Affordability Task Force or in the election. One of your members, the mayor of Ottawa, said he found about it in the media, which I think we can agree is not an appropriate way for one of the two cities that this bill affects to learn about a bill.

What kind of consultation happened with the big city mayors, and what kind of consultation do you think is appropriate for a bill that affects municipalities in this way?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Thank you for the question.

Through you, Chair, to the committee, I would say that I think there are a lot of people united—not just Ontario’s Big City Mayors, but I believe AMO and some of the administrative groups, that are all looking for more consultation. If there’s one thing that’s a take-away from my presentation today, it would be that.

I will also say, though, that we’re really looking for meaningful consultation, and I would suggest that, because this is still an urgent matter, if the bill is to be focused on housing, we should get moving on it to see exactly how that would roll out. So we want to make sure there’s meaningful consultation, but not consultation that goes on and on and on, if we are trying to address a housing crisis. I would suggest that, obviously, working through AMO, working through Ontario’s Big City Mayors, the AMCTO organization and others, we’d probably be able to get a quick idea of how much consultation would be needed.

But at the end—I’m sorry to repeat myself—it’s about meaningful consultation to really deliberate and take away both what we feel may be good but also what we have some concerns on, to make sure it makes its way through to the final bill.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Yes, I agree. And when you have no consultation, it’s hard to have meaningful consultation.

The response that I’ve heard from many of your members, certainly in my region of Niagara, the three largest cities, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, and Welland—all the mayors have come out and said that this is not really helpful. As a matter of fact, this bill could actually create a lot of divisions in council and could make things take longer—because you’ve got the mayor vetoing council, council vetoing the mayor.

Earlier, we heard from planners who said, “Planners often help mayors make difficult political decisions. What if you have a NIMBY mayor, and then you’ve made them into a strong NIMBY mayor—how does that help things?” So it would have been nice to hear from a lot of these folks who are coming forward now.

1420

We don’t want to paint this as being status quo versus change, because I think we all agree that there needs to be change.

Your group has come forward with a number of comments, one of them around the Ontario Land Tribunal and some improvements that could be made there. A lot of your members feel very strongly about that.

I’ve also heard about a sunset on application approvals. You did some really good research around approvals that developers are sitting on. It’s not always municipalities that are to blame; sometimes there are two sides to the story. I can’t remember the number; I think it was maybe 175,000 units of housing that were being sat on.

Would you like to talk about any of those other solutions that we could move forward on quickly?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Through you, Chair: That’s an excellent point, and I’m glad you’re highlighting it. Everyone wants to “get it done”—but “get it done” doesn’t mean that it’s only on the municipalities. “Get it done”

means everybody—that means developers, both private and even non-profit, and it also means the province. There are things that the province could be doing to “get it done” as well. I gave an example about conservation authorities or other ministries and outside influences that have to be filtered through the municipal lens as development applications come forward. Sometimes those are the holdups—it’s not municipal governments; it’s not municipal staff.

So if there are going to be tools that are given to municipalities, whatever they are, to try to get things done, that’s great. But we have to have the government look in its own backyard as well; we have to have developers do it as well, to try to figure out how we can all work together.

I think, other than “consultation,” the word I would like everyone to be left with is “collaboration.” There is a way to get this done without the finger-pointing, and we’re all on board for that at Ontario’s Big City Mayors.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Very well said. Thank you for that.

Is there any time left?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes, a minute and 45 seconds.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to ask the Ontario Real Estate Association—you talked about the problem with NIMBYism, and I think we all understand what you mean, especially those of us who have council experience. I’m going to ask you the same question that I raised: What happens when you have a NIMBY mayor and you’ve passed legislation that makes them a strong NIMBY mayor, and then the NIMBY mayor goes out and unilaterally hires a NIMBY CAO and a NIMBY head of planning and uses all the powers that this bill is giving them to take that approach? There’s no guarantee in this legislation—really, the guarantee, I think, as Chair Guthrie and other mayors would tell you, is in working with council and having that leadership in council. If you give all of the powers to a mayor, where is the guarantee that they’re going to use those powers to combat NIMBYism instead of promoting it?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: I can start, Chair, if that’s okay.

Wasim, feel free to jump in.

I think a key provision in the bill, MPP Burch, is the provision that states that a lot of these powers, when used, have to align with provincial priorities. I think that’s going to be a good way to govern their use, especially as it relates to housing.

If there’s a strong mayor who is catering to NIMBY-type forces, they’re going to be held back because, obviously, NIMBYism and catering to those kinds of folks is not in keeping with the goal to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years—something that we support. So I think—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I’m sorry. That’s all the time we have left for this.

MPP McMahon, for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I’m just going to put my time on, because there’s no clock up here for us.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We have a timer here, too. Don't worry.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I know, but I like to see it, too. I'm surprised we don't have it here for the guests, too—but that's another topic for another time.

Thank you, everyone, for coming in today.

This is a question, first off, for the Toronto Region Board of Trade. Roselle, thank you for coming in today.

So 1.5 million homes being built in 10 years—pretty lofty, pretty optimistic. I'm hoping that we can do that because we have our housing crisis, for sure. But I'm just wondering about tracking. Do you think it would be beneficial for us to track those homes, to actually see that they're being built in a timely manner, in a yearly manner? Is that something you would want to put in the bill?

Ms. Roselle Martino: I can say, from a personal view and on behalf of the board as well, that what gets measured gets done, from my experience. So I certainly think tracking would be something that wouldn't hurt. There could be a benefit to it, for sure.

I do want to emphasize the importance—others have here, too, and Mayor Guthrie said it: It's also about collaboration. Solving the housing crisis is not on the back of one particular level of government. The business community certainly wants to do their part, but there has to be a collective effort, a collaboration, to meet that laudable, most-needed goal.

And yes, I certainly think tracking could be beneficial.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So how would you see that? Would you see a yearly check-in or report-back publicly for transparency—or any ideas?

Ms. Roselle Martino: I think, again, transparency and public reporting—there are many tools the government has to be able to share that, whether it be through FES statements, whether it be through a budget. There are many, many vehicles that the government can use. Also, local governments have their own vehicles, their own tools, which they could use to report that information publicly. I do think transparency is very important, because there is only one taxpayer.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What if we're lagging behind on our numbers for building homes? What if we don't achieve it in our first year? Do you have any ideas as to how to deal with that?

Ms. Roselle Martino: My goodness, you're asking me to solve a very complex policy issue.

Again, I think the first step, to be honest, was setting a target. At the board, from a business perspective, we had called for that for a long time, so it's wonderful to see that there's a target.

I'm not sure. Housing is—this is the process. There's process, and then there's actually implementing the policy. I just think those two things have to go together, hand in hand. I don't have an answer in terms of what to do if we don't meet it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'll jump to my next presenter because I only have four and a half minutes.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have one minute left.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: This is to Ontario's Big City Mayors and Cam Guthrie: It's only Toronto and Ottawa—why? If we're serious about dealing with our housing crisis, why not other municipalities, such as yourselves, Barrie, Brampton?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Through you, Chair, to the committee: I believe that the answer we've been told is because—forgive me if the numbers are wrong—about a third or just over a third of the housing required for our province is going to be focused on coming from Toronto and Ottawa. So I think that's what the government was trying to empower, to try to get that started. I also believe it was a way in which they could see how such a system could roll out, to see what such impacts could have on those cities before they wanted to actually see about rolling it out to others. But I will indicate to you directly that there are many members that are looking to see if these types of authority or powers can be given to other mayors across—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. I'm afraid that's all the time we have.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm very happy to be asking at this stage of time, because in this group we have two sides of the housing issue: the Ontario Real Estate Association, OREA, which as one entity represents real estate and developers and the housing markets; and, at the same time, Ontario's Big City Mayors, who represent the city side of the story, that kind of thing.

First, I'll go to the Ontario Real Estate Association. Based on your experience, what is the average wait time from when a developer is working on a project until the time he can start selling units for people?

Mr. Wasim Jarrah: Thank you very much for that question.

It depends on the municipality that they're building in. From what we've seen, from the time that the original plans for permitting are submitted to the time the shovels go into the ground, it can be up to 10 years.

1430

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: So any developer can start a project now and hope that in 10 years they will be able to get something to sell to the market?

Mr. Wasim Jarrah: That is correct.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: If we continue doing the same exact process we are doing now, do you think we can meet the 1.5 million houses in 10 years? If the file I'm filing today—I'm getting approval for it after the 10 years?

Mr. Wasim Jarrah: I think the past experience has shown that we do have a deficit when it comes to building homes, and we are here today debating how we could build more homes into the future. So my short answer would be, no, we would not be able to.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Impossible?

Mr. Wasim Jarrah: I would say it would be pretty difficult.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Talking about the delay—is this delay because of any process in the province, for example,

or in any of the agencies of the government; or is it solely on the municipalities' side?

Mr. Wasim Jarrah: Our experience in dealing with and overseeing some of these stakeholders has been that there are significant delays at the municipal level. I can also see that certain powers that can be provided by the province can really speed up—both of them are tied, but at the municipal level, at the local level, you would see a lot of those delays there.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: For example, if a developer went to a city and got approval from a mayor, and then a mayor passed this project to the rest of the departments within the city, like the head of the planning department, engineering department, traffic department, traffic study, environment study—all kinds of studies needed to be done. How much control or influence or oversight, even, does the mayor have currently?

Mr. Wasim Jarrah: I can't comment on that because every municipality, again, is different. I don't think I'm entitled to give a comment on that.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Can I take that question to Mr. Guthrie from Ontario's Big City Mayors and hear your feedback about that?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Through you, Chair, to the committee: Right now, most governance structures at the municipal level do not allow the mayor or any member of council to direct staff at all. So if a developer—whether that be private or non-profit—wanted to come and try to build any type of housing, we can pass it on over to staff, but we cannot direct staff.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Basically, the mayor has no influence to accelerate anything? If it stayed in the development department or the planning department for a year, two years, three years, he has no control over that?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: That would be correct. Mayors are the spokespeople for the decisions of council, and mayors do not have any more undue influence over staff without the direction of council. So there is no power to direct something to the top of the pile, to get something done for the importance of a city, based on the current structure that we have.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: From your understanding, have you seen any projects which the mayor and the council approved coming to the city procedures kind of thing and blocked there for many years—or never seen the light?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Oh, yes, absolutely. I can only speak for Guelph by default, but there have been hundreds of units that have been approved—actually, pretty quickly—by our planning staff, but then once it got to council, it was defeated.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: What do you mean by “defeated”? It has been approved. Do they revert it back? Do they keep it there? Do they procrastinate for many years? What is the process? Can you give me an idea how it can be defeated if the council and the mayor—and the approval process have been done?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Well, because at the end of the day, staff can only ask for a recommendation of approval. Then

it's up to the will of council to determine whether or not they want to agree with planning staff or not.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Mr. Cam Guthrie: So in some cases you will have planning staff approve an application for development, but then it goes to council for the final discussion and debate and vote, and in some cases, council can vote against—they have the right to—an approval recommendation from staff, which, yes, normally then goes to an appeal, which delays and takes time and can cost money, and usually the outcome is not what the council vote was anyway. So it does cause quite a few years of delay.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: So if it came as no, the developer who already spent that money and many years on the process—what is he going to do, usually?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Appeal to the province. And normally, in most cases, it will get approved by the appeal board, and then it moves ahead anyway, but there has then been that huge delay in those units coming—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. I will now go to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the presenters for coming in today. It's nice to see some familiar faces.

My first question is to Cam Guthrie, the chair of Ontario's Big City Mayors.

It's interesting hearing the Conservative MPPs and the presenters talk today about the housing affordability crisis we have; I agree that we do.

It takes 22 years to save up a down payment in our city right now. You need to be earning over \$100,000 a year to afford a two-bedroom rental in Toronto. It's ridiculous, and it's affecting the economic and social health of our city.

The challenge is how we're going to solve the housing affordability crisis. Certainly, housing supply is an issue that we need to address. It is a medium-term to long-term solution. It has to be part of the goal, but there also need to be some affordability measures that are implemented in the short term and the medium term to make life affordable for folks.

This government likes to point the blame at municipalities for slowing processes down—and that impacts affordability.

What are some measures the provincial government can take to make housing more affordable in big cities?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Through you, Chair, to the committee: I will highlight some of the things that even my colleagues on the screen here mentioned in their presentation.

Getting ready for just implementing as-of-right zoning right away across the province would be a major step forward. I can say that many municipalities part of Ontario's Big City Mayors are already looking at doing that, but if we had the government take the lead on that, that would be wonderful. I think they would get all-party support for something like that—and mayors too.

The second one is reform for the OLT. We have been asking for this for a long time. I do know that the

government is looking at resourcing the OLT a bit better, which Ontario's Big City Mayors are thankful for. But there needs to be some real reform—and if I could state that NIMBYism is one of the biggest issues that have things go to the OLT. We made some recommendations specific to supportive housing and affordable housing—as an idea to make sure that that gets reformed so those important units that are needed for our most vulnerable citizens do not get held up at the OLT.

One of your other members asked about accountability and timeline and measurements. I'm a big believer in how you cannot manage what you cannot measure. If there's going to be some type of accountability and measurements put on municipalities, I think the same should be said for the government—if there are going to be requirements from ministries and other agencies that require some approvals for developments to move forward, that help with contributing to the housing units we need, then they, too, need to be held to account, and they, too, need to be measured and publicly and transparently provided so that we can hold everybody to account, because that's that whole collaboration thing, working together to try to get it done.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. Tracking is absolutely critical.

My question is directed to the board of trade. Thank you so much, Ms. Martino, for coming in.

I am a big fan of city councillors. I think that they provide necessary input and influence over the budgetary process, and they have been leaders in pushing for initiatives that the mayor sometimes is not interested in doing, such as inclusionary zoning, short-term rental reform, advocating for more supportive housing—the list goes on.

I think there's some harm to democracy if we consolidate power in the mayor's office, and there is some harm to civic engagement, which I encourage the board of trade to consider when you're thinking through your recommendations.

1440

The question that I have is similar to the question I had for Cam Guthrie. This government is very focused on really pointing the finger at municipalities for holding up housing supply. What are some measures that you think the provincial government should move forward on to create housing supply that truly meets the needs of Ontarians? That's more non-market supply, more affordable housing supply, that missing middle supply. What are your recommendations there?

Ms. Roselle Martino: I think you know this, MPP Bell: The Toronto Region Board of Trade has been advocating for missing middle inclusionary zoning for quite some time. We were hoping that it would be part of this particular bill, and we would love to see it as part of this bill. That's certainly a measure the provincial government could take, and we will continue to beat that drum from the board of trade, from that perspective.

Mayor Guthrie's point about the OLT—we have heard that from businesses as well, from developers that want to

move forward, that want to look at initiatives. If there could be some levers that the province could exercise to make it more consistent—I think that's the issue. Housing is not something that is a problem in one particular city; it's true across the entire province—I know people think it's only in the big cities, but that's not the case. So if there's consistency that could come from the provincial government, I think that would really be helpful. And the OLT example was a very good one that Mayor Guthrie used.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I remember when we were developing our housing platform and we heard from northern members and northern constituents loud and clear that we need to acknowledge that the housing affordability crisis is now Ontario-wide.

Ms. Roselle Martino: Yes, 100%.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's not just in Toronto and Ottawa and cities that have a lot of economic growth. It is Ontario-wide now.

I also took note of Cam Guthrie's comments around how to reform the OLT. It's something my colleague MPP Burch and I follow very closely. So thank you for that.

I'm going to hand over the rest of my time to MPP Harden. I appreciate your time today.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's just one minute and five seconds left.

Mr. Joel Harden: That's fine, Chair. "Follow the critic" is a good rule of thumb when we work in this place.

I have questions for my friends in the realtors' group.

We have been told that this legislation is about making sure we can deal with supply. But it seems to me there's another metric we have to worry about here, and that's housing cost and housing price—we've seen the residential housing market in the last 10 years in this province double. We have other jurisdictions around the world talking about regulating your profession's commissions—normally 7% of the first \$100,000 from the sale of a home and 3% after that—as a means to bring prices back under control. Failing that, we'll see more of these private Purplebricks—or DuProprio for my friends in Quebec—enterprises that are trying to do the same thing to the private market.

Do you support further regulation of your profession's fees as a means to reduce the costs of ownership homes?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: No, we don't support that. I think that's an idea that will probably cause more problems than it would help.

But there are some things we can do on demand, and very quickly. Lower taxes on first-time buyers—that's a great idea; we should explore that one. Let's get criminal interests out of the real estate market—so a beneficial ownership registry. That's another one that could curb demand—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I have to cut you off. I'm sorry.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You're not on Hansard on that last part.

MPP McMahon, four and a half minutes please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'd like to direct my questions to Cam Guthrie. You're popular today.

Just picking up on some comments you mentioned—one was that you would advise meaningful consultation. I wonder if you can define “meaningful” and give me examples.

Mr. Cam Guthrie: I think “meaningful” means we would like to make sure that some of the ones I named—ourselves as a group, but AMO and others—to actually have maybe even some round tables with some of the municipal sector agencies and stakeholders, along with the administration side as well. We have a CAO group at the Ontario's Big City Mayors caucus, as an example, or AMCTO, which is a great organization in Ontario. I think having some round tables with them would be good as we look at how, in Ottawa and Toronto, if this passes, this actually starts to play out. I think there's an ability to see where it may work and where it may not work, and having those meaningful conversations with us would be really good.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: You mentioned holding not just builders and housing providers etc. to account, but holding the government to account. Can you give examples of how we would do that?

Mr. Camera Guthrie: I think the same as timelines are being put upon municipalities for application approvals or for site plan approvals—again, trying to focus ourselves on goals and trying to meet targets. I think that's healthy. At the same time, though, those goals and targets should also be for ministries—where we need approvals from different ministries before actual development applications can move forward in municipalities, too. If you're going to do something on us, okay—but you've got to also hold yourselves to account as well, because then we can talk about what's working and what's not and we can actually manage what we're measuring.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Back to you, Toronto Region Board of Trade: You're on the hot seat again.

You know, 1.5 million homes being built in the next 10 years is pretty optimistic.

Do you think that just building single-family detached homes would address the housing crisis?

Ms. Roselle Martino: No.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What other types of homes would you say that we need to be building?

Ms. Roselle Martino: Multi-generational units is an example of something that we've called for—it's not just single-family homes. We have to also be mindful of what's happening in our society. We're welcoming a number of new immigrants, which are a key economic lever—again, I'm speaking from a business perspective. Many of the immigrants come and they live in multi-generational homes. We have to be responsive to that in terms of building homes as well—so it's not just single-detached.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So laneway suites, stacked towns, affordable—

Ms. Roselle Martino: Laneway housing, yes.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Rooming houses, affordable rentals, garden suites—the whole kit and caboodle.

Ms. Roselle Martino: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: They all need to be addressed everywhere.

Ms. Roselle Martino: Yes. It's a multi-pronged solution.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Building every type of housing everywhere.

Ms. Roselle Martino: Yes.

To Mayor Guthrie's comment about meaningful engagement: Developers also need to be engaged. They're often not at the table at the start of these conversations. I would strongly encourage that, because, again, as a business consortium, that's what we hear from developers who are our members.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Moving to the last seven and a half minutes for the government side: MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I have five questions in seven and a half minutes, so I would like to ask you to be specific so we can get done with the five I have.

The first question will be going to Matthew from the Ontario Real Estate Association, along the same line as the costing of the housing: What could be the effect of having enough units—let's say we have enough units that units go on the market and stay waiting for somebody to buy. How will that affect the pricing?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: I'll ask Wasim to jump in on this one as well. He has that on-the-ground experience.

It would likely result in a much more balanced market, a market where buyers and sellers are on equal standing, as it were, in terms of negotiation. Generally speaking, that's a good thing for all parties.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My next question would be to Cam from Ontario's Big City Mayors.

How many times have you seen mayors seeking MZO from the ministry to be able to bypass some of the processes and get some of the public projects through some of the hoops to get shovels in the ground?

1450

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Through you, Chair, to the committee: There are stories of that, certainly, but I would suggest that those MZOs that are being requested from municipalities usually are going through some type of a public participation and process for engagement before such an ask from a municipality goes to the minister for an MZO.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: In my understanding, if the process were going smoothly through their council and through their departments, they wouldn't need to ask the minister for that—just to clarify to the public.

Mr. Cam Guthrie: I can't really answer that. There are too many specific cases, and as a generalization and as the chair, as the spokesperson for Ontario's Big City Mayors, it's difficult for me to answer that when each specific case is different.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: But you've heard stories about that?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: I have, but in the current governance structure, it would still usually require a council approval for an ask of an MZO for a project anyway.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Yes, but this is still the political arm of the city, the council and the mayor. I'm talking about other things.

When we talk about the municipality all the time in regard to municipality coordination—in your opinion, when the media addresses that or the provincial government addresses that, who do they mean by “the city”? Who is the person or entity they're basically addressing when they say “city” co-operation?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Well, again, I can't speak for whoever is saying that. They could be speaking to staff, or they could be speaking to the ultimate decision-makers, which is council as a whole, or they could be speaking to both.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Exactly. So you agree with me that council and the mayor are the political front. They are taking the pressure; they are taking the media attacks sometimes. They are at the head of the line, in regard to impeding or delaying or whatever, when they actually have very minimal control on what's going to happen underneath that layer for the project, basically.

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Yes, that can be the case—including that sometimes we don't have control based on what the applicants are asking for either. It's not solely resting on staff and council, which is why I say that we're a collaboration—one more time.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I will put my last question to the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

Ms. Roselle Martino: Oh, no, the last one—you saved the best for last.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: How do you see the impact, financially and economically, when there are big projects delayed for 10 years, when sometimes the developers or the investors or the company who is trying to take the project give up and walk away?

Ms. Roselle Martino: Again, not to be obtuse, but there's a huge economic impact. That's exactly what we've heard from developers. The process is so long—which is one of the reasons why I mentioned they also need to be part of the engagement—that they lose interest and they look, sadly, outside of our province; it's not even just outside of our city. They will go to other provinces or to the US. That has a huge economic impact on our city and our province and country, to be quite frank.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Do you agree with me that this could be a pivotal piece to move Ontario back to its leadership in being the economic engine for the province?

Ms. Roselle Martino: I think it's a huge economic lever, which is why the board, as a business consortium, and coming at it from an economic perspective, supports it.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Do you know that Canada, or Ontario, specifically, came at the bottom—I think 34 out of 35 areas—in time delay to get a project up? Have you

envisioned that? Have you been confronted with that with any investment groups or people who are coming to Canada?

Ms. Roselle Martino: We have. I can't speak to the specifics, but we have certainly heard—because, again, as I mentioned, in order for any kind of growth to happen, you need investment. We've heard from foreign investors for FDI, foreign direct investment, that the time delays do impact their decision-making.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Another question—

Ms. Roselle Martino: I thought you said “last”—

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I left it as a backup question.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute and 10 seconds left.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Mr. Guthrie, just for raising awareness, can you walk us a little bit on the topics—after a developer puts a request to the city? What areas, what sections, what divisions have to get through that to get a final shovel in the ground?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: It could be density, parking ratios, water, stormwater, what environmental impacts it might have, hydrology—

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Fire department?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: Yes, emergency services, certainly.

Again, this is why the processes at all three levels can be somewhat cumbersome. So that's why conversations about how we can all work together to move through on the processes would be really wise, in my point of view.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: And the majority of those departments are not under the oversight of the mayor?

Mr. Cam Guthrie: No. They have the independence and professionalism that they have currently to make the—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry; that's the end of the questioning.

Thank you very much to all the presenters and all the questioners. That was very good.

FEDERATION OF RENTAL-HOUSING
PROVIDERS OF ONTARIO
ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPAL
MANAGERS, CLERKS
AND TREASURERS OF ONTARIO
FEDERATION OF URBAN
NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'd like to welcome the next set of presenters. We have the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario; the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario; and the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods (Ontario). Again, some are here in person, and some are virtual.

I'll remind each presenter that you have seven minutes, and please state your name at the beginning of your presentation.

Please go ahead and start.

Mr. Asquith Allen: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, members of the committee. My

name is Asquith Allen. I'm the director of policy and regulatory affairs for the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario. FRPO, as we are known, has been the leading voice of the province's rental housing industry for over 30 years. We are the largest association in the province, representing those who own, manage, build and finance residential rental units. We represent more than 2,200 members who own and/or manage over 350,000 units across the province.

Today I'm pleased to have the opportunity to provide FRPO's comments at the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy's studies of Bill 3, the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.

I'll start by providing a brief overview of the current state of the rental housing industry in Ontario.

Our rental market has experienced a slight softening, with vacancies rising during the early parts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the slowdown in the market was primarily in urban areas, while areas outside the GTA experienced little or no change.

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The reversal back to a very tight rental market has already happened. We're pretty much there now. Urbanation has reported a vacancy rate of about 1.4% for Q2 of 2022, which is a significant decline from the about 5.1% about a year ago.

The 10-year supply gap is also on the rise, and FRPO recently commissioned a study that concluded that over 300,000 rental units are required, on top of what is currently planned, to address the supply gap over the next 10 years. This is in a context where there is very little supply built, generally, in decades. Over 80% of Ontario's existing rental stock was built before 1980. However, there has been some movement in the right direction over the past few years.

Due to some measures by this government, purpose-built rental construction starts have doubled over the past five years, reaching over 13,500 units in 2021, but we still need an additional 30,000 rental units a year to meet the anticipated shortage over the next decade.

With respect to Bill 3 and its measures, FRPO supports the general policy goal of building more housing, and more housing faster, in the province, and we do need bold action to address the current housing crisis. We commend the government for continuing to think outside the box when it comes to new measures to address the housing challenge.

Bill 3 empowers heads of council in two large municipalities to move priority projects forward, allowing mayors to directly hire senior management, appoint chairs of committees, establish new committees, bring matters directly to council for consideration, veto certain bylaws, and propose the municipal budget. FRPO is not in a position to comment on the efficacy of each one of these matters, but, generally speaking, we support the policy objective of the bill as it relates to reducing impediments to building more housing, and faster, in the province.

Given the state of the rental housing challenge in Ontario, any and all measures are definitely welcomed by our industry.

FRPO has proposed a five-point Ontario rental housing strategy that calls for an as-of-right zoning framework for purpose-built rental; density incentives for purpose-built rental projects; a provincial triage service led by a rental housing facilitator; financial incentives for mid-market rental projects; and income supports for tenants and measures to address the skilled trades shortage.

In summary, we are pleased to see that the government is continuing to advance measures that seek to expedite housing development in the province, and we look forward to being a partner to government and to members of the committee as it continues to explore more ways to build more housing in the province.

I thank you for the time. When it's appropriate, I am happy to take your questions.

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

I will now call on the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. Please state your name before you begin speaking, for Hansard.

Ms. Elana Arthurs: My name is Elana Arthurs. I'm the 2022-23 AMCTO president. I appreciate the time to speak to you today.

The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario represents over 2,000 municipal staff, including many chief administrative officers and senior municipal leaders. Our members are dedicated to the work they do for their councils and in communities, in providing professional management, leadership and apolitical advice to municipal councils.

AMCTO's interest in this bill lies with the proposed administrative and operational changes and the impact they may have on local government professionals.

My presentation today will focus on three specific points which we believe require further deliberation, debate and discussion: (1) the effective removal of the non-partisan local government leadership; (2) the potential of politicizing the role of the CAO and other senior local government officials; and (3) the additional administrative burden on our members and other municipal staff.

The changes proposed in the bill would result in the effective loss of the non-partisan local government professional, given that the responsibilities previously assigned to the CAO would rest with the mayor, who could forgo hiring a CAO altogether. Our CAOs are valued professionals who provide expert advice to council in its decision-making and oversight role. After those decisions are made, the CAO must abide by the intentions of council to carry those forward within the scope of the law. These decisions already include restructuring or changing departments, innovating services, and so on. The CAO, using their experience and leadership, must balance political, administrative and community considerations and present those to mayor and council. The CAO must also represent and support their staff concerns to mayors and councils, who are not always receptive to staff's prudence and advice.

We feel it is imperative that we make the following recommendations: (1) that the authority to appoint and

remove a CAO be kept with council as a whole; and (2) that the CAO position be made mandatory, with specific administrative responsibilities that are outlined in legislation.

Our second concern with the bill is in regard to politicizing the senior leadership roles. There is significant risk of threatening the neutrality of local government leadership but also the wider municipal public service. A non-partisan administrator provides professional expert advice based on data and evidence, providing their best recommendations to council for it to make its decisions.

While the bill excludes the hiring and firing of legislated positions, it would presumably include chief planner, city solicitor, commissioner, general manager or city engineer positions, which are typically hired by the CAO as the administrative leader, which keeps these positions non-partisan and apolitical, given the importance of their work.

We'd like to take the opportunity to remind the committee that AMCTO has long held the position that there remain opportunities to strengthen municipal administration through clarifying the roles and responsibilities between council and staff—in particular, the role of the CAO and the role of the mayor as the CEO, as has been recommended by Justices Bellamy and Marrocco. The reasons for and results of their inquiries point to the continued importance of providing this clarification.

If we look to the provincial and federal orders of government, there's a clear line between minister and deputy minister responsibilities. The administrative head of the ministry is neutral, just as the rest of the public service. This should be the same at the local level.

We are recommending the following: (1) that appointments of department heads and senior leadership continue to be made by the CAO to ensure that staff and senior leadership remain apolitical; (2) that the roles between staff and council be clarified; and (3) that the roles and responsibilities of the CAO and the mayor as CEO be clarified to distinguish between administrative and political responsibilities, as recommended by Justices Bellamy and Marrocco.

Finally, we're concerned about the tight timelines for implementation and when other municipalities would be included in this legislation. We would appreciate being consulted on this, given the impact on municipal staff. The November 2022 timeline for implementation will cause additional administrative burden for municipalities, an issue of great importance to AMCTO and our members. While this burden will be experienced in many areas of the city, it will be most pressing for those responsible for holding the municipal elections in October. Staff are required to bring forward updates to policies, codes and bylaws, and make changes to processes and procedures. This can't be put in place overnight, and the capacity of municipal staff is already limited, especially during an election. There will also be a challenge to plan for this as the structure will depend on who is elected mayor and what is in the minister's regulation. There are many unknowns.

We offer the following three recommendations:

(1) Extending the timelines on implementing any proposed changes to give staff more time to update bylaws, policies and procedures and develop new ones as needed, and ensuring that any future transitioning of other municipalities to this new structure allow adequate timelines;

(2) Changing various references to minister regulation to allow more opportunity and process for consultation; and

(3) That the government consult with the sector, including staff associations, before introducing these authorities to any other municipalities.

In closing, we have significant concerns about the effect of removal of the non-partisan local government leadership for potentially politicizing the role of the CAO and other local government officials, and the additional administrative burden on our members and other municipal staff, all of which will have an impact on the operations and administration of local governments. The professionalism, expertise and experience of CAOs and municipal staff are of tremendous value to municipal organizations. Our association provides these leaders with professional development, as they lead increasingly complex organizations and deliver more services, to ensure that they can support councils in achieving positive outcomes and results for their communities while also ensuring equitable access for their residents.

Again, I thank you very much on behalf of AMCTO and our members. We appreciate the opportunity today.

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

I would now ask the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods to start your seven minutes, and please state your name before you begin.

Mr. Geoff Kettel: My name is Geoff Kettel. I'm president of the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods (Ontario). The Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods, FUN, provides a provincial voice for residents' associations in Ontario's urban areas. Residents' associations are comprised of volunteer citizens who are engaged with their municipal governments in civic matters, including land use planning and development, transportation, services provision, and fiscal matters.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the legislation that would give strong mayor powers to municipal mayors, initially in Toronto and Ottawa. Since the July announcement, the idea has received an increasing amount of media attention—most of it criticism and skepticism. The most frequent reaction is, "Why is this measure necessary?" It's a good question, indeed.

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In the case of Toronto, Mayor Tory has been able to win just about every vote that he wanted to win, as the Toronto Star's Shawn Micallef noted, "with his endless political capital and control over council that makes other mayors jealous."

This legislation is unprecedented and marks a huge shift in governance in Ontario's municipalities. Urban municipalities are governed by democratically elected city

councils. The decisions of civic governments have been the collective responsibility of those elected city councils, not the singular responsibility of one member. While democracy isn't always perfect, citizens of urban municipalities have generally been satisfied with their form of representative government.

Bill 3, schedule 2, permits the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to designate municipalities to be subject to its provisions. It's our understanding that the minister will designate Toronto and Ottawa under schedule 2, despite no consultation or consent from its citizens on the necessity of this arbitrary move. We oppose this initiative.

The legislation seems to assume that the best form of governance is one where one person has autocratic powers to enable them to get their way.

In our opinion, the best form of city government is one where the mayor has to win the support of council through providing sound leadership and championing initiatives that are well thought out and that respect the needs and wishes of councillors across the city.

That last point raises the question of the impact of a strong mayor on ward councillors. Will the strong-mayor system diminish the role of the local councillor, and will the question at election time become "Can she or he work with the mayor's agenda?" rather than "Will she or he represent the interests of the ward?"

At a more fundamental level, how does a strong mayor address the key questions facing the city of Toronto and its increasing financial problems? This year, the fiscal gap is in the order of \$800 million; next year, it's much larger, probably due to the province amending development charges legislation and the Planning Act.

For instance, the section 37 community benefits switch from being a density bonus to a land-value rate basis is estimated by city staff to reduce Toronto's section 37 revenue by 40%.

The fundamental imbalance between the city's revenue needs and its overreliance on property taxes and the annual begging excursion to Queen's Park is not new, but it is getting much worse, and dangerously so. Toronto is a dynamic, driving force in the province and should not be treated this way.

By offering Toronto and Ottawa a strong mayor, is the Premier in fact prescribing a placebo designed to obscure the real issue of provincial dominance over cities and the province's continuing refusal to provide the revenue tools that the city really needs?

While there are policy and political issues with this legislation, it also raises the fundamental municipal governance issue that the previous speaker spoke to. It has not been highlighted generally or understood to date how council relates to the public service. The draft legislation gives the head of council the power to determine the organizational structure of the city and to "hire, dismiss or exercise any other prescribed employment powers with respect to the head of any division or the head of any other part of the organizational structure." This latter power is proposed to apply generally, with specific exceptions, with

respect to designated positions—the clerk, the treasurer, and designated statutory positions such as the medical officer of health—but it leaves a lot under the ambit of the legislation.

The municipal governance model in Ontario separates the political from the bureaucratic worlds in order to ensure that politicians seek impartial advice from the public service, something that is at the heart of the Westminster model. As such, the city manager is responsible for management of municipal staff and accountable to council, not to the mayor or individual councillors directly.

Under the US model, the strong mayor hires and fires key city officials. The result is politicization of the hiring process and a lack of impartial advice.

Will the next step be to give the Premier the power to hire and fire managers in the Ontario public service?

Where are the studies to show that the current process is not working? The separation of political and bureaucratic powers has worked well for over a century. A change of this magnitude should not be introduced in an ad hoc manner without consultation or scrutiny.

We respectfully request that the legislation be withdrawn.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We will now move to the question-and-answer part.

I will now go to the official opposition for their seven and a half minutes. MPP Bell, please start.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Asquith Allen, Geoff Kettel, and the representatives from the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, for coming in.

My first question is to Mr. Kettel. I also share your concerns that this bill will consolidate power in the mayor's office. It's extremely concerning to hear that the mayor can choose our city manager, the head of TCHC, the head of the TTC, the head of Toronto Hydro, the head of the planning department. It seems like a huge amount of power, especially when we also think about how the mayor will be able to control the budgetary process—if there's a two-thirds veto majority, it means that the mayor will be able to control the budgetary process. What impact do you think that will have on our residents' ability to get involved in the budgetary process and influence what city departments do?

Mr. Geoff Kettel: I'm very concerned. As somebody who has been involved as a former public servant in the Ontario public service, I understand the political-bureaucratic issue—and then, since so-called retirement, the last 10 years working with residents' associations in the city and understanding the municipal world much better. I would be very concerned that we're placing a huge amount of power in the hands of the mayor's office, which is unnecessary, which is undemocratic, and which will result in unhappiness and frustration on the part of residents across the city. I think it will be tantamount to causing a revolution over time. People will be—as I said in the presentation, the question is, "Well, you're running for council; are you a mayor's person or are you not?" It just frustrates democracy, I think.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Democracy certainly benefits when there are different perspectives at city council, and I think that this will harm it.

Experts have also accused the Ontario government of trying to hand-pick heads of the public service, as well, in the case of Ron Taverner. So you're not the only one who has some concerns about that.

My additional questions are focused on Mr. Allen with FRPO.

We've heard experts come in and talk about the need to address the housing shortage, which is real, but we also know that addressing the housing shortage is not the only way to tackle our housing affordability crisis.

We have a huge issue with the high cost of rents in big cities, especially Toronto. Now you have to be earning over \$100,000 a year to afford a vacant two-bedroom apartment in Toronto, which puts even middle-income people moving into our city—there are no affordable housing options available to them, and it is important that FRPO and the purpose-built rental providers understand that that is a problem.

What measures is FRPO interested in pursuing that would address the housing affordability issues that are facing renters today?

Mr. Asquith Allen: Thank you for your question.

We have met—at least, individually—to talk about some of these issues.

Ms. Jessica Bell: We have.

Mr. Asquith Allen: Definitely, in addressing the crisis and the issue of affordability, we do think that increased supply will lead to lower rents. You don't necessarily have to look too far back in history: Once the pandemic struck in March 2020—by that summer, vacancy was quite high, at least in the GTA, with folks moving out to secondary markets. At that time, a lot of rental providers were offering one month free, two months free, a store gift card, as a way to secure leases, because it's important to try to keep your buildings full. That, to me, indicates that a process that can see expedited and streamlined approvals of rental housing as a priority can definitely go a long way to reducing not just the supply gap but the high rents that are created by the supply shortage.

1520

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that comment.

We recently had a new development that opened up on College Street in my riding of University–Rosedale. I looked online to try to determine how much the available rent was for this new purpose-built rental that had been built. For a 1,000 square-foot apartment, it costs \$3,500 to rent. That is not affordable for the vast majority of people who are moving into this city. It's certainly not affordable for people who are earning minimum wage or who are in entry-level positions, or newcomers to the city.

I have some suggestions to FRPO and your purpose-built rental providers. It cannot just be on governments to address the housing affordability crisis. There needs to be a recognition by purpose-built providers that stronger rent control is needed. There needs to be less opposition to inclusionary zoning. And there needs to be a real awareness

about the impact of above-guideline rent increases on tenants on fixed incomes. So I urge you to consider that.

One measure that has come to my attention recently is the city of Toronto's vacant home tax that is being implemented now. This is a very effective way to address housing supply, because Stats Canada has indicated one in five homes in Canada is empty. This issue applies not just to residential properties, but it also applies to purpose-built rentals. Right now, the vacant home tax is not—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Corporate landlords are exempt from that vacant home tax.

Is this something that you're seeing with your housing providers—that there are some rental units that are being kept vacant for long periods of time?

Mr. Asquith Allen: I'm sorry—the last part of the question again?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Are some of your providers noticing that there are some units that are being kept open for periods of six months or more?

Mr. Asquith Allen: Only if it's necessary because of the state of the unit on turnover. A lot of the members I talk to have very low vacancy right now and very low turnover. Not a lot of people are moving, and there aren't a lot of vacant units at any given time right now.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm finding, in my own experience, visiting some of the purpose-built rentals in my riding—666 Spadina, 88 Bloor Street East—that there are high vacancy rates, and I've spoken to the property managers there and they do confirm that. So I am seeing it as an issue in my riding—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry; we're out of time.

MPP McMahon, you have four and a half minutes. Please go ahead.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you, everyone, for coming in. I really appreciate you taking the time and sharing your thoughts.

The first question is for AMCTO, for Elana and David. You mentioned consultation. You mentioned that instead of the hiring and firing capabilities, you feel that just simply clarifying the roles better would be beneficial. Can you elaborate on that a little bit more for me?

Mr. David Arbuckle: Through the Chair: In both Justice Marrocco's and Justice Bellamy's inquiries, they really raised concerns in relation to how the legislation outlines both the role of the CAO but also the outlining of the mayor as CEO of a municipality—and they highlighted the fact that that at times creates confusion in relation to decision-making, even though, clearly, within the legislation, the CAO is the administrative head of the organization. Our organization and other municipal organizations have felt, along with Justice Bellamy and Justice Marrocco, that they could use greater clarification in the Municipal Act as it relates to those specific responsibilities.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Any suggestions for consultation?

Mr. David Arbuckle: Yes—lots of it; some would be better than what currently happened in relation to this bill.

Certainly, within the legislation itself, it clearly indicates that the minister is going to have the ability to move this legislation to any municipality that they feel meets their objective. At a very minimum, we would expect, if that were to occur, that that open consultation occur, whether it's through the legislative process or whether it's through another process within those individual communities—that there's consultation that happens with the municipality, but also with municipal associations like AMCTO.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Over to the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario: Ottawa and Toronto are the focus right now in this bill. How do you feel about that? Do you think there's a housing crisis elsewhere in Ontario that should be addressed?

Mr. Asquith Allen: As far as FRPO stands, there's definitely a housing crisis in the province as a whole. Toronto and Ottawa are good places to start, but I think, sure, if the government wants to look at other areas, there can be a conversation about other municipalities to which these powers may apply in the future.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Don't you think that if we're in a severe housing crisis right now—Mississauga is growing very fast; Brampton; Barrie; Hamilton—why not just do all municipalities, or do more than two, if we're serious about building housing?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final minute.

Mr. Asquith Allen: I think Toronto and Ottawa are good places to start. At least in Ontario, no jurisdiction has these powers currently. I don't want to put words in the mouth of the government, but if there are other municipalities to which this should apply in the future, then I think having a conversation on that is worthwhile.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What about tracking the number of houses built? Do you think that's a good idea for transparency and accountability—to track if we can actually be building the 1.5 million in the next 10 years?

Mr. Asquith Allen: If possible, definitely. When builders build homes and sell them to people, if there's data that can be made available, that's something worth looking at. Like I said before, 13,500 rental starts in 2021—that number obviously came from somewhere. So we wouldn't necessarily be opposed to data.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'll now move to the government. MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to all the witnesses for your presentations.

I would like to start off with a question to Geoff from the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods.

As you know, in Bill 3, we are proposing a system with checks and balances. For example, council could override a mayor's veto power with a two-thirds majority vote—that's already part of the bill—and mayors would continue to be subject to the existing accountability and transparency rules. These proposed changes would also require mayors to exercise their new powers in writing before they

exercise them. The checks and balances are all over this bill.

However, we know the housing crisis is real, and we really need to accelerate the way we are going towards tackling this issue.

Local councillors have the ability to vote on matters that impact the entire city—in fact, that impact the entire province, to be honest with you—but by the nature of the position they are only voted in by the residents of their particular wards or particular councils that they run in the election. The mayor of Ottawa or the mayor of Toronto is elected by the entire population in the entire city, yet they still only have one ward, just like a councillor who runs for a specific ward.

Do you not see the benefit in providing some kind of enhanced tools so our mayors can get things done—at a speed that constituents need and expect them to act to build more houses?

Mr. Geoff Kettel: With respect, I've been working at council, attending committees—the planning and housing committee—following the so-called EHON program, Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods, very closely. That is a city of Toronto initiative. The mayor has supported it throughout. It has moved forward. They've passed several aspects of that. There was some other aspect still to be done, but it's moving forward. It seems like it's an answer to a problem that doesn't really exist.

1530

You're going to revolutionize the whole structure of the city government, how it works, which is very risky. As I said, there's a big downside to this. It's really a disincentive to vote. “Why should I bother? She's going to support the mayor.” It's sort of a disincentive to the electoral process, to the democratic process. There are real risks with this thing.

The long title of this thing is An Act to amend various statutes with respect to special powers and duties of heads of council. That's what the act is about. The short title, Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, is a diversion. There's nothing in here about building homes. It's going to be about budgets, about everything that council does. Massive change is happening here without, really, public consultation or public understanding. It's not a democratically sound idea. Too many risks are involved here.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: What's your feedback on councillors still having power to override the mayor's ruling by two-thirds of the wards? What's your comment on that?

Mr. Geoff Kettel: Yes, that's bit of a check-and-balance, but it's just adding more complexity to it. Are they really going to risk going along with the mayor for the sake of this? It's very risky. It's getting into numbers: two-thirds, 66.66%. Do you know what I mean? It's just unnecessary, at the end of the day.

The mayor decided to defer the rooming housing legislation because he had concerns there that not all councillors would support it. That's the only example. He's got everything through. He has been very successful as a mayor.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Chair, what's the time left?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Two minutes, 45 seconds.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Okay. I'll quickly share my time with MPP Sabawy.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for Mr. Allen from the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario.

I have heard some of the testimony that the system is working fine. Can you comment on the rental situation in Toronto and the GTA—actually, all of Ontario?

Mr. Asquith Allen: In the words of some, I would say better is always possible. There are definitely things that can be changed and fixed with respect to the way municipalities work. I'm not going to pretend as if I'm a municipal governance expert, by any means, but what I can tell you is that it takes about seven years from when you put an application at a municipality to when you can hand the tenant a set of keys. That can extend even longer if things need to go to the Ontario Land Tribunal for appeal. It does take a long time to actually get things built.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: In regard to pricing—there was some talk about the cost of rents. Just for the record, our government froze the increase during COVID, and for this year, it's 1.2%, despite the fact that inflation is 5.6%. We fixed it for next year at 2.5%, which, again, is a fixed rate. Just for the record, I'll remind you that when the NDP was last in power, in 1990, the increased rate for rentals was 4.6%. In 1991, it was 5.4%; in 1992, 6%; in 1993, 4.9%.

Can you comment on the appetite of developers or investors to build rentals now?

Mr. Asquith Allen: We recognize that when the government made its decision, around the end of June, around the 2.5% for next year, the rent increase guideline calculation per section 120 of the Residential Tenancies Act—the formula itself spits out 5.3%, but there is a cap of 2.5% for the purpose, at least in the government's view, of sort of maintaining stability in the rental market on the cost side for the end user, the renter of that product. We do find—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sorry. Thank you very much. The time is up.

I'll now move to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you for the presentations. Thank you to all presenters for being here.

In the home in which I was raised, I was told to always use what you have before you build or buy something new. So from an Ottawa perspective, we have a whole lot of federal office buildings right now that are at vacancy rates that would shock many people. We have a whole lot of businesses, as we found out in some of the government's work canvassing small businesses during the pandemic, that have completely shuttered because of the change in activity, particularly in the core of the downtown. So, our friend from FRPO, I'm wondering about the extent to

which you've had some consultations with your Ottawa-area members with respect to this.

I note that Treasury Board President Mona Fortier, from the federal government, has noted that moving aggressively and converting existing federal office buildings that are not being used for buildings—because employees are making the choice to either have a hybrid model of working from home and going to the office, or not going into the office at all. Productivity rates for work seem to be the same, so people are happy that targets are being met.

Have you entered into any discussions—or members of which you're aware entered into discussions—about how office buildings in Ottawa or in other regions of Ontario could be repurposed into housing? I take what the government is saying—we do have a supply issue, and this could be one way to deal with that issue.

Mr. Asquith Allen: I haven't heard of any formal discussions on that front, but it's definitely a conversation that's worth having, in the sense of, let's use all the available land and resources that we can to get to a happy medium, at least in the rental space, which is the folks I represent.

Even in the city of Toronto, the difficulty is obviously that when some businesses, unfortunately, had to come to a close or end as a result of the pandemic—lost revenues, all these sorts of things—you do anticipate that new businesses will form coming out of the pandemic. So there are some people who might want to implement these kinds of conversion policies, if you will, right away, to see what the new commercial norm is in some of these buildings. But I definitely wouldn't be opposed to a conversation as to what that could look like.

Mr. Joel Harden: Well, then, if it's okay, we'll pass business cards at some point during the break. I know the federal member of Parliament for the area that we serve in Ottawa Centre is trying to have an investigation as to how we could quicken this pace up, so I'll put you in contact with that person.

Chair, through you: Also thinking about this bill, the strong-mayors bill, and what it's trying to do, it would seem to me that it wants to speed up the pace of figuring out how to get things done—and thinking, Mr. Kettel, about what you said with respect to accountability and concerns around accountability, you may have heard we have a bit of a light rail transit issue in Ottawa. One of the things the government has done, with a good push from Ottawa Centre—I was glad we were willing to work with them in the last session on this—is, they've declared a public inquiry, and its report is going to be coming out relatively soon.

What we know from that inquiry and the implications for our discussions of this legislation, Chair—just so you don't think I'm going off-topic—is we found that again and again, there is reason to believe that folks who were close to the current leadership of the city of Ottawa were receiving sole-source contracts in constructing one of the biggest infrastructure projects our city has done in a long time, almost \$2 billion, and that the system, within months

of opening, was non-functional. It was turning brand new steel wheels into flattened, blunted, highly dangerous situations. We've had five derailments. We've had public health concerns in a number of the stations. And what I'm hearing from the commission that the government has declared is that a big issue there was with this practice of sole-source contracts being issued from the Rideau transit commission to the leadership at the city of Ottawa.

That is a major infrastructure piece that a mayor, potentially, under this legislation could be conducting. Does it give you cause for concern, given Ottawa's experience, that this potential legislation could put us further down that road of perhaps a little less transparency than the public deserves and, frankly, misusing and wasting some of the public's money?

1540

Mr. Geoff Kettel: Well, yes, look at American cities. They have these kind of scandals all the time.

Absolutely, the Westminster model, the separation of the political and the bureaucratic, is a proven model that allows for more accountability, more transparency—we could always use more. But moving from the provincial field as a public servant to the municipal field as an observer and a participant in the process, I am very, very supportive of the municipal model as it exists right now. Sure, AMCTO says that there can be some improvements and maybe some clarification, but I think it actually is a very wonderful process. It's a wonderful partnership between the politicians and the public servants, and I think the province could learn a lot from the municipal field. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Mr. Joel Harden: It goes with repurposing what you have—if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have just under two minutes.

Mr. Joel Harden: Well, then, I'm going to ask our colleagues from AMCTO to respond to the same question I posed to Mr. Kettel. From an accountability, from a governance perspective, given our experience in Ottawa with the LRT that we've been working with the government to get right—hopefully we can get it right—does this bill give you pause for concern? If this becomes law and some of these major hiring, HR decisions are put solely into the office of the mayor, could we walk ourselves into further problems—where we have major infrastructure projects delayed, non-functional, potentially unsafe?

Mr. David Arbuckle: Through the Chair: I think what we would again point back to, MPP, is around both the Justice Bellamy and the Justice Marrocco inquiries, where, without going into great detail in relation to those pieces, there was significant political involvement in traditionally more transparent and administrative dealings with the municipalities themselves.

Ultimately, if there is some confusion in relation to those overall roles of the CAO, the mayor versus staff versus the private sector or public sector, there does run a

risk of there being more of these types of issues at the local level.

In all fairness, all municipalities must have some sort of transparency procurement bylaw related to how they are procuring goods and services.

However, at the same time, this legislation introduces more uncertainty as it relates to the relationship between the politics and the operations of a municipality.

Mr. Joel Harden: Okay. But just—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's just 10 seconds left.

Mr. Joel Harden: Check out the LRT commission's website on the disclosure issues. We need your help to make them better.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll move to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: We know we are in a serious housing crisis, and we all want to work as hard as we can to resolve that and take serious steps for that. It has gone on too long, and we're way behind.

The goal with Bill 3 is to build 1.5 million homes in 10 years, which is pretty optimistic and lofty.

What types of homes do you think should be built to solve the housing crisis?

We'll go with Asquith first, please.

Mr. Asquith Allen: Homes of all types, I think, are needed. We definitely heard, in the lead-up to the last election, calls to end exclusionary zoning and some other policies to intensify in certain areas. Doing that is not necessarily easy.

You're a former Toronto city councillor, and there are other former councillors at the table. NIMBYism is a real problem that a lot of councillors wrestle with in their day-to-day work.

I don't necessarily think Bill 3 is the only tool that will be used. I think it's one tool in the tool box that should be available. I don't want to veer off too far from your question, but specifically to the bill, what I've seen and what members have spoken to me about happening at the council level is that if an application doesn't go forward or is rejected by council or it falls outside of the timeline for approval per the Planning Act, the applicant will make their appeal to the LPAT—now it's the Ontario Land Tribunal—and the municipality will pass a motion to direct the city solicitor to use their department resources to defend the city's opposition to that application at the tribunal, which takes time. From what I've heard from some members, appeals can go into the two-year mark which—at this point, housing delayed is housing denied. So if we can get more homes built faster, FRPO is definitely in support of anything that will achieve that principle.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And by "homes" you mean not just single-family detached homes; semis, quadplexes, triplexes, stacked homes—

Mr. Asquith Allen: Sure. Purpose-built rental should be a part of that mix.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, affordable rental, multi-res—so as much rental as possible.

Over to Geoff on the same question: What types of homes do you think would solve the housing crisis? If this bill is meant to build these homes, what kinds of homes should these 1.5 million homes be?

Mr. Geoff Kettel: I would cast the question a bit wider—I think we're very narrow on this thing. I think there are many aspects. I think we need to look at a provincial approach, not just a GTA approach.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final minute.

Mr. Geoff Kettel: It seems like everybody coming to Canada is going to come to Toronto. Why would that be? Maybe we need a planning framework that would encourage people to go to different parts of this huge province, or an employment policy.

We need to look at inclusionary zoning, at reducing the pricing on homes within areas already approved. We need to look at vacant homes. We need to look at where housing is approved and yet nothing is happening. In my community, there are thousands of homes approved by the city but nothing is happening. Why not? We need to get the projects started that have been approved. We need beneficial ownership. We need to reduce speculation in the market.

There are so many issues here. The issue has been reduced to a simplistic moniker, and we really need to open this up and look at it more broadly.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Over to the government for the last seven and a half minutes: MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: As Ontario's population has grown, housing construction has not kept pace. Ontario is facing a housing "crisis"—a very serious word—that is phasing young families and newcomers out of the dream of their own home ownership.

On yesterday's news, it was telling us that, in 20 years, the population of Ontario will grow to six million, which is 40% growth in 20 years. That's why all parties agree that 1.5 million new homes are needed in the coming 10 years.

My first question is for the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario. Thank you for your feedback regarding Bill 3, Stronger Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022. Our partnership is imperative to the proposal put forward in Bill 3. The proposed legislation is an important tool to get more homes built faster, faster, faster, and it's one of a number of initiatives being taken by the Ontario government to address the housing shortage.

How do you think Bill 3 will help increase the supply of affordable rental housing in Toronto and Ottawa, which is a lot of people from all parties' concern, and can you share some examples of where the mayors, say, in Toronto or Ottawa could use these tools to expand the construction of purpose-built rentals?

Mr. Asquith Allen: I would go back to part of an answer I provided to MPP McMahon. Definitely, the veto power that's proposed in the bill is important with respect to vetoing motions at city council to direct the city solicitor to use those department resources to defend the city's opposition to planning projects or to planning applications. From some of the conversations I've had with members, appeals at the Ontario Land Tribunal can take up to

two years, sometimes maybe even a little bit longer. The opposition to their wanting to build that housing by the city solicitor's office is not helpful in that regard.

1550

As I said before, housing delayed is housing denied—that simply goes to increased costs, not just in the city, but across the province. If a mayor had the ability to use that veto power to at least not extend the waiting period for when projects, in some cases, are inevitably approved—based on the application that's put in, the builder, their consultants, their engineers know that everything is in conformity with the official plan, the zoning. Obviously, there might be some resistance from community associations, which definitely need to have their voices heard in the process. But if everything is in conformity, then we should be getting on with putting shovels in the ground and getting keys in people's hands as quickly as possible.

Of the new Canadians who come to the country every year, historically, 47% of folks landing in Canada choose Ontario as their home. Most of them aren't coming here with the 20% down payment, at current prices, to buy their own home, so they are left to rent. So our product, we feel, is something that all parties and the government should look to as a priority to build over the next 10 years.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for your answer.

Some of the other presenters are very concerned about the checks and balances. From your point of view—you said you support the bill—do you have any concerns about that?

Mr. Asquith Allen: Again, I'm not going to tell you that I'm a municipal governance expert, but the thing that the mayor—let's say of Toronto—has in common with each councillor is that they're both on the ballot. The mayor of Toronto is on the ballot in every ward in the city. I don't think it's necessarily a problem that increased powers be given to the person who is directly elected by each and every voting citizen in the city. That's just how I feel.

I do remember some of the policy discussions, which got to be very intense at the city when it came to subways in Scarborough and bike lanes and some of these other more contentious issues. Had the powers been with, let's say, the mayor of Toronto at that time, would the results have been different? How much further along would the people of Scarborough be in having more reliable sources of transit? These are all questions we can ask, but at least these powers are being debated here and now to be used to get more done.

Mr. Billy Pang: My second question is for the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods (Ontario).

As one of the residents in Ontario who is pretty close to Toronto—my riding is Markham–Unionville, a highly populated area, well received. As you mentioned earlier, the situation now with the city's construction is moving forward—but, obviously, the housing crisis didn't happen overnight; it has been there so long. There must be some issues, as you mentioned, that are slowing down the pace

or not catching up with the pace of the population. You talked about your concerns.

What are your suggestions to better address the housing supply crisis, in your opinion?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final minute.

Mr. Geoff Kettel: There's a whole raft of things, as I mentioned before—things like reducing speculation, having an inventory of beneficial ownership, having housing moving forward where it's approved but it's not moving forward, getting vacant homes filled. You can walk down certain streets in North York and every second home is vacant. Why? It's a mystery. There are lots of things.

We're actually doing an incredible job with housing in Toronto. Maybe we need to move across the province and not just focus on Toronto. We need better transit to allow those communities—and not funnelling everybody onto the Yonge line so that nobody can get on the Yonge line at Eglinton—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. I'm sorry, but we're out of time.

That ends this round of presenters, so I thank you for coming and presenting.

INDWELL COMMUNITY HOMES
ONTARIO MUNICIPAL
ADMINISTRATORS' ASSOCIATION
COMPASS REFUGEE CENTRE

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We are ready to get started for our last round of presenters. In this round, we're going to have Indwell Community Homes, the Ontario Municipal Administrators' Association and Compass Refugee Centre.

I will remind everyone that it is seven minutes for the presenters, and if you'd please state your name at the beginning of the presentation so we can capture it in Hansard, that would be appreciated.

I'll now call on Indwell Community Homes to begin.

Mr. Jeff Neven: Good afternoon. My name is Jeff Neven. I'm the CEO at Indwell. We are a non-profit charity that creates affordable housing communities and provides health care supports to help people transitioning from homelessness into permanent housing. Our housing and supports have proved to permanently move people out of hospital and institutions, to decrease hospital readmissions, to decrease police calls, to decrease emergency room visits, and to put an end to encampments. We are the largest developer of supportive housing in Ontario, adding 311 deeply affordable homes in this calendar year, 2022, to our total of providing supportive housing to nearly 1,200 people in eight municipalities in southwestern and southern Ontario.

We are in a housing crisis in Ontario, and those with the least resources are paying the biggest personal consequences. We see homelessness growing not only in big cities, but in every small town across Ontario. As a hous-

ing developer, we share frustrations with market developers around neighbourhood opposition to density, unreasonable parking requirements, endless required studies, lengthy environmental approvals, educational development charges that disproportionately target low-income households, and more. As a non-profit charity, we have the additional challenges to find solutions for people currently living in hospitals, ravines and shelters. Our tenants face discrimination disguised as planning, further creating challenges to find housing solutions.

1600

While we invite strong-mayor legislation to address some of these concerns, we are also aware that, on its own, erasing these challenges will still not create viable solutions for those needing below-market housing. Creating more housing supply is critically important, and this supply must include the entire spectrum of affordability, from deeply affordable rent to market ownership.

Creating supply is essential, but also of concern is the more hidden aspects of the problem, which have more complex solutions that require nimble, subtle and, above all else, compassionate approaches to resolving community issues. These challenges affect the smallest number of people but have the largest impact on our cityscapes. Homelessness, lack of resources for people with disabilities, health care system dysfunction, and the proliferation of cheap narcotics and methamphetamines affect a relatively small population. However, the destruction wrought on our cities and the lives of those affected must compel us to act.

The good news is that we have solutions to our housing and homelessness challenges, but we cannot do it alone. In addition to the strong-mayor legislation, we need to immediately act on:

(1) linking ODSP shelter allowance to the actual market cost of housing. Without an adequate shelter allowance, people with permanent disabilities cannot purchase their housing from the market and require a non-profit and charitable response;

(2) creating a strong, well-funded program for constructing new affordable housing in Ontario;

(3) targeting and coupling health care supports with this new, deeply affordable housing. We want people to live in permanent housing, not hospitals or ravines. Health care support in affordable housing is the proven strategy to end halfway health care;

(4) working with and incentivizing each level of government and our local communities to create housing and support solutions for our most marginalized.

We welcome strong leadership to solve our community challenges of housing and homelessness. Indwell and our sector have proven and effective strategies that will change our cityscape. We can't do this alone, and we welcome mayors and provincial ministers across Ontario to join in creating real change. Let's get this done.

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

We'll now move on to our next presenter, the Ontario Municipal Administrators' Association. Please state your name before you begin speaking.

Ms. Margaret Misk-Evans: Good afternoon. My name is Margaret Misk-Evans. I am on the board of directors for the Ontario Municipal Administrators' Association. We are known as OMAA. I am also the chief administrative officer for the town of Tecumseh. With me today are my fellow board members Robin Dunn, OMAA past president, and Laurie Kennard, OMAA vice-president. Robin and Laurie will provide a brief background about our association and submission to you, and then I will speak to our recommendations.

Mr. Robin Dunn: Madam Chair, good afternoon. I'm Robin Dunn. I am the chief administrative officer for the town of Oro-Medonte.

OMAA is a professional association established 65 years ago that exists to serve and support Ontario chief administrative officers with respect to their professional management role and contribution to municipal good governance. Our membership includes approximately 250 of Ontario's CAOs. Collectively, our members provide professional management and administration for municipalities that represent over 75% of Ontario's population. Our membership also includes approximately 125 of the next generation of CAOs at the deputy CAO and commissioner level.

OMAA's objectives cover raising awareness of the role of the CAO, focused professional development for the CAO, encouraging the next generation of CAOs, and advocacy for enhanced support for the role of the CAO.

Ms. Laurie Kennard: Good afternoon, through the Chair. My name is Laurie Kennard. I am a vice-president of OMAA and the chief administrative officer for the township of Severn.

In our submission to you, we provided one recommendation, that being clarity within the Municipal Act for the role of the CAO. In the context of Bill 3, changes will be made to the Municipal Act to accommodate the strong mayor, and we recommend complementary language that will also provide a clear mandate that better positions CAOs to expedite housing construction and other further provincial priorities. We maintain that good governance at the local level requires CAO role certainty within the Municipal Act, as has been done in other provinces.

The current wording within the Ontario Municipal Act lacks clarity, which can lead to a misunderstanding of responsibilities between administration and elected officials. The lack of clarity has been pointed out in three independent Ontario judicial inquiries. I've listened today; you've heard a lot about Justice Bellamy and Justice Marrocco and investigations into matters of municipal misconduct. I refer you to the quotations from the Ontario Ombudsman and Chief Justices in support of the role of the CAO that we included in our submission.

I'll turn it over to Margaret, who will take the end of our presentation.

Ms. Margaret Misk-Evans: As a long-standing association of CAOs, we are strongly committed to ensuring that Ontario has an excellent system of local government, with an emphasis on professional manage-

ment of public affairs. Our goal is for municipal governments in Ontario to deliver high-quality policy advice to elected leaders and high-value services to residents and businesses at a reasonable cost.

CAOs have demonstrated that we can deliver on provincial directives and initiatives, as most recently evidenced during the pandemic through quick and creative organization of pandemic-related services initiated by the province and provided by municipalities.

OMAA has no comment on the strong-mayor system outlined within Bill 3. However, we do take a strong position on strong professional administration separate and apart from the governing body of local government. For that reason, we support previous presentations that have raised concerns regarding what could become a partisan relationship between the mayor and CAO as Bill 3 currently stands.

It is our recommendation that along with Bill 3, the Municipal Act be updated to entrench the role and responsibilities for the Ontario CAO.

For your reference, key changes proposed by the complementary legislative measures attached to our submission include:

- defining the responsibilities of the CAO relative to the mayor and council;
- clarifying the role of the head of council as chief elected official;
- establishing the CAO as the head of administration; and
- crystallizing the primacy of administration's role in implementing the mayor's and council's decisions, plans, policies and programs, as they are influenced by provincial legislation, regulation, policies and priorities.

In closing, we believe these measures would distinguish the key role of a city manager or CAO and ensure effective, responsive, apolitical, professional and accountable municipal administrations able to deliver on local and provincial priorities—most urgently, to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the course of the next 10 years by ensuring shortened development timelines and standardizing development processes.

We thank you for your time, and we're happy to respond to the questions of the committee.

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

I will now move to the Compass Refugee Centre. Again, please state your name at the beginning. You may proceed.

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: My name is Shelley Campagnola. I'm the executive director of the Compass Refugee Centre. I'm here representing that centre, as well as some of my own personal thoughts. It's a unique situation. We are not municipal experts. We are not governance experts. This is more of a qualitative observation around Bill 3, with a few identified concerns about the structure of the bill.

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We recognize that the objectives of the bill are to—it's "get it done" legislation supporting that priority of the

current government. We also recognize that right now it focuses on Ottawa and Toronto, with the possibility of designating other municipalities. We also recognize that it is for addressing provincial priorities around housing and the identified supporting actions needed to fulfill those priorities, including infrastructure and transportation development. Finally, we recognize that this is an effort to fast-track decision-making to avoid situations where municipalities are not on board or even oppose province-wide priorities—as well as the weight of strong voices that may be all about NIMBY.

As a refugee centre, we fully understand NIMBY. We work with a population that has no status in Ontario. They are asylum-seekers and have never really had status in this province.

It is very different outside of Toronto than it is in Toronto. I come as an organization that's actually in Kitchener, Ontario. We see and experience that difference on a daily basis.

We recognize that housing is a global challenge and that poverty is one of the most significant root causes of homelessness. We recognize that stagnant wages, unemployment, high housing and health care costs all play into poverty. Being unable to afford essentials in all of these categories is something that we see our clients deal with on a daily basis. This increases—an individual or family at risk—their risk of being homeless in quite short time.

One of the questions that comes out of this initiative of the number of 1.5 million homes is: for whom? We recognize that millennials, new Canadians, low-income, and also the 35- to 55-year-old age group are the ones who are most hit by the lack of housing at this point in time. People are struggling.

The benefit of a strong-mayor system has been supported by comparing to other strong-mayor cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, London and Paris. While we do not argue with some of the objectives of the strong mayor, we want to suggest that such comparison is not helpful. When we look at the record of those four cities on homelessness, it indicates that a strong-mayor system is not the answer.

Chicago, in 2019, had over 58,000 people experiencing homelessness, with job loss, physical and mental health issues, eviction and substance use as the common causes.

London had well over 10,000 people sleeping on the rough, and they come from every walk of life, many of them wanting to find work.

Los Angeles has roughly 59,000 people homeless. And in southern California region, they've had the biggest spike in homelessness in 2020 and moving forward.

Paris has 30,000 people experiencing homelessness with no answers. Salaries have not risen at the same rate as rental prices, under-investment in housing stock—namely, the building of new affordable housing to meet the demands—and property prices, personal safety and aesthetics all being part of the challenges.

Strong mayors have not answered these issues. This does not mean we are opposed to strong mayors. We just believe that it needs to be rethought, tying strong mayors to housing—that that is really not going to make the

difference. We are talking about two separate issues: the authority of a mayor in the municipal governance, and the question of housing.

I also want to suggest that housing—1.5 million homes—is not just about putting a roof over people's heads. In the 2008 book *Beyond Homelessness*, authors Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian J. Walsh wrote about “home” as being even more important than shelter, comparing the isolated executive travelling from condo to condo back and forth across the country to the person living in the ravines of Toronto, having a community he knows and trusts. It was the latter who knew the fulfillment of the primal need of belonging, who experienced “home.” That does not mean that living in the ravine is the desired goal. It reveals that the building of houses must also be about building “home.” Strong-mayor legislation has nothing to do with this.

Specific to the actual proposed legislation, there is a concern of accountability expressed in the legislation, and our question would be: Would the same process that the mayor brings to accountability not be transferable to council as a whole entity? And there is, again, nothing in the legislation that ties it to housing other than the title of the bill.

The legislation does reflect a valid frustration with a drag-your-feet mentality—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final minute.

Ms. Shelley Campagnola:—thank you—but fails to recognize that the resistance may be less about NIMBY and more about community and home, and that those concerns need to be addressed and not just overruled.

Concern about the approval of bylaws seeming to go from certain to provisional depending on the will of the mayor and the lack of process to identify evidentiary-based decision-making, with substantive criteria required to veto or to enact coming regulations—the ambiguity around that is a deep concern.

I will leave it at that.

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

I will now move on to the question part of our session, calling on the official opposition for the first seven and a half minutes. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the presenters for coming in this afternoon to share your expertise and the work that you do to house people, especially people in need.

My first question is to Jeff Neven, the CEO of Indwell Community Homes.

You explained the issue supportive housing providers are dealing with right now, where it isn't just a home or a house that they are providing an individual in need; they also have to provide mental health supports, health care supports, food and additional measures to just keep people going and alive—and getting better, in some situations.

I also question how Bill 3 will address housing affordability, especially housing affordability for people in need, people who access supportive housing.

I'd like to focus the question around what the provincial government can do to make housing more affordable, especially for people who are using supportive housing. What recommendations do you have for the provincial government to make supportive housing more available to people?

Mr. Jeff Neven: Thank you for the question.

As mentioned, we have a number of challenges that are facing us. One aspect is the supply. Our sector, the non-profit and charitable sector, is being asked to occupy a larger space in the provision of rent and supports than in previous decades. I would suggest that that's largely because of a couple of things: the propensity of the market sector to look for the opportunity to maximize their profits, as they're designed to do, and, second, the now 20-year delinking that we have had in the province of Ontario of the housing allowance; it's delinked from the actual cost of housing.

In the past, the lower end of the market actually provided housing to those on fixed incomes and with permanent disabilities. Today, in most communities across Ontario, the gap is now over \$1,000 between the just under \$500 that people on ODSP get for the shelter and housing and utilities allowance, to the actual low end of what the market can provide. That's where our sector is being called to fill that gap, and the challenge is that our sector needs the resources to be able to do that.

There are real solutions, actually, and if we fail to create new affordable housing stock, if we fail to bring in supports to keep people housed in that affordable housing, it has a significant impact on other places being used for housing. We're seeing that in our hospitals, we're seeing that in shelters, we're seeing that in jails, and we're seeing that in ravines. I think all of those are poor locations for permanent housing, and so it makes sense that we equip the sector with a reliable funding stream for affordable housing and tie that to health care supports to keep people housed.

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Ms. Jessica Bell: One measure that I hear discussed is speeding up the legalization of rooming houses because it's often the most affordable housing option for people who are low-income. That's certainly the case in my riding. The other argument I often hear is to increase the amount of funding and financing available to non-profit developers to build new supportive housing units. I'd like you to comment on them and then also give me an estimate of how much it typically costs to build a supportive housing unit.

Mr. Jeff Neven: I'll answer your last question first. It depends where that unit is being built in Ontario. We are building units in Mississauga—that's as far east as we are—through Hamilton, Kitchener, Cambridge, Woodstock, Norfolk county, St. Thomas and London, and we have some projects under way in Chatham-Kent. Our experience has been that there's a spectrum of costs. Largely, the construction cost is quite similar in all those areas; the land cost would be the variability piece there. The cost of the unit—there's not actually that much

difference in the cost, whether it's a one-bedroom or a two-bedroom. The cost for us is between \$400,000 and \$500,000, all in, including land and soft costs, financing on the build, the fees, development charges. All those pieces would factor into that cost.

That's the answer to your last question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I really appreciate it. And the other two pieces—around increasing funding that's available to build non-profit housing, and if you have a position on rooming houses.

Mr. Jeff Neven: I would suggest that any type of shelter is better than no shelter. However, I think that we want to continue to push to ensure, as CMHC says, that each Canadian has a home that suits their needs. So I would be cautious to say that something I need or my family needs may be universal for everyone else.

As well, if there's an individual who chooses or wants to live in that type of housing, I would support their interest in that. For them, that might be the best of the options, but it may not be the best goal for them for the permanent future.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final minute.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My final question is to Shelley Campagnola.

I appreciated the example you gave, looking at Chicago, London, Los Angeles and Paris and pointing out that they all have a homelessness crisis. I also think of Toronto as having a homelessness crisis that Mayor Tory, quite frankly, has done not enough to address. So I question whether giving him additional strong-mayor powers will lead to us building more supportive housing, us taking a kinder approach to encampments, us finding more permanent housing for people. He has already had that opportunity for eight years, and he hasn't done enough.

My question is just to focus on the provincial piece—do you have measures that you think the provincial government should be introducing to make housing more affordable for people who are homeless?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry; I have no more time left in this session.

I'll now go to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you, everyone, for coming in and sharing your experiences with us and introducing your amazing organizations. I really appreciate you taking the time to do that today.

My first questions are to Compass and Indwell. We'll start with Indwell and keep you on the hot seat.

Everyone here is in agreement that we are in a serious housing crisis.

Do you think there should be specific housing language in the bill to ensure this priority of strong mayors building housing is met?

Mr. Jeff Neven: Absolutely, we're not asking our mayors to just have strong leadership in whichever direction they want to lead. I think there is the provincial priority of ensuring that we have housing, and in particular, I would suggest that that has to include affordable

housing for us as Ontarians to be the society we want to be. So I would encourage that the term “affordable housing” be entered into legislation and to narrow down the focus or to ensure that that’s included in the creation of new housing stock.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What about tracking? The goal is 1.5 million homes in the next 10 years. Would you think we would need to track that and somehow put that into the bill for transparency?

Mr. Jeff Neven: A target is always worthwhile having. For our organization, we’re currently in a strategic plan of building 1,500 supportive housing units in this calendar year and in the next two—together, 1,500 units. That holds me accountable as a lead of our organization. I would suggest that we need to have a number that’s going to actually change the trajectory. It may seem like a stretch goal at this point, but I think we’re in a spot right now in our communities, in our cities and towns that we need, actually, a goal that’s going to change the cityscape and the townscape.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So you have committed to 1,500 units. You’re reporting back to your board, or publicly—who is monitoring that? Can we learn from that model?

Mr. Jeff Neven: Our governance structure is obviously a little different. We’re a non-profit charity. We have a volunteer board that would be accountable to all of our stakeholders as a public entity. So any of our donors, any of our political leaders, any community organizations can hold us accountable to that, to make sure that we’re leveraging the equity, leveraging our resources that we have to maximize the opportunity for solutions.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And do you think it should just be Toronto and Ottawa, the key municipalities—or is there a housing crisis right across Ontario that we need to address?

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

Mr. Jeff Neven: Yes. We have communities across Ontario calling us nearly daily, saying, “Can you come and help?” We’re hearing from communities that are as small as 3,000 or 4,000 people, who are calling us and saying, “We have 20 people living in an encampment down by the river.” So this is no longer a Toronto and Ottawa issue; this is an Ontario issue, a Canadian issue. And if we don’t resolve this quickly, it will lead to other institutional collapses within our society.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Twenty-five seconds left.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, I think I will come to Compass Refugee Centre when I have more time in the next round. Sorry.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The government side: MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Chair, I’ll share my time with MPP Laura Smith.

Thank you to all the witnesses for your presentations.

I’ll start off with Compass Refugee Centre. As you know, Bill 3 proposes ways that we can build more houses—nearly 1.5 million houses—in the coming years.

This bill also consists of various checks and balances. For example, council could override a mayoral veto with a two-thirds majority vote. The proposed changes would also require mayors to exercise these new powers in writing. So there are overriding mechanisms. They need to have everything in written format before they proceed with it. The ultimate goal is to bring more homes.

As Canada and as a province, we always open our hands to bring new Canadians to our communities, particularly those who may be fleeing their countries and coming here as refugees.

Given the experience and expertise that you have, can you give some feedback on how we can better facilitate newcomers and refugees, given the fact that it is even difficult for Canadians who are established here to find homes that meet their needs and budget? How can newcomers and refugees be expected to build a life here when there is simply not enough housing supply on the market?

1630

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: From a refugee asylum claimant perspective, we want to recognize that there’s no such thing as a place to live federally; you must live provincially somewhere. And so while the immigration process is a federal process, it is played out provincially on a day-to-day basis.

We have thousands of people in Ontario who are going through the refugee claim process that is limited, in terms of its outcomes, as to how quickly processes will be completed. The average right now is two to five years. That means they only have access to work permits and no other benefits, and before they even have access to work permits, they only have access to Ontario Works, which—for an individual, at \$390 a month—doesn’t even put them in a rooming house. So we must recognize in this bill that the demographics are not just citizens and permanent residents; they are people who reside in Ontario, and their housing needs need to be met while they are going through the process. For refugee claimants—those we work with—roughly 90% of them do become protected persons. It seems strange that we let them in the front door, and then we kick them out the back door to live in the backyard while they’re going through the process.

Right now, for example, in our area, in the Waterloo region area, we have 100 new refugees coming each month. They have three weeks to find permanent housing, at which point they are going to emergency shelter, because there is no such thing as permanent housing within their affordability. They’re not working by then. They do not have sufficient resources by then.

So I think the province—in terms of the bill itself—needs to recognize the vulnerable demographics that do not necessarily have market viability at this point in time, but also recognize the role must also include speaking to federal policy and finding a way to bring some consistency across that so that people aren’t forced into unlivable situations, starting as vulnerable people and becoming even more vulnerable.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: What are some examples of how our government can help ensure vulnerable Ontarians have enough housing options? And what's your view on working with all three levels of government to make sure that we help the vulnerable population?

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: Income is number one, and that is really around the world—poverty.

Again, an individual having been separated from their family, coming to Ontario, going through the refugee claimant process—right now, eligibility hearings are running about 16 months; that means they are 16 months on Ontario Works, minimum. Getting \$390 a month to put a roof over their head is inhumane, and it's not who we are in Ontario.

Whatever we think about immigration policy—again, they do not live on federal grounds. They must live in a province. That is where people reside. So Ontario Works, Ontario disability supports must be improved, as Jeff from Indwell said, to match what is even achievable in terms of getting a roof over their heads.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Chair, I will pass it on to MPP Laura Smith.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Smith, please.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for everyone's submissions.

I'm going to take this theme that my friend has set forth and put this to Jeff Neven of Indwell. Keeping these themes in mind—Ontario definitely has a housing crisis, and this is driven by a severe shortage of supply in rental housing and affordable home ownership, and this is something that has been going on for a long time. We need to build more housing of all kinds—more market housing, but more affordable housing and supportive housing.

What can the province do to work on a close partnership with your organization to help build more supportive housing, to get those units, to keep our most vulnerable safe and secure?

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

Mr. Jeff Neven: Thanks for that question.

We don't have a lack of opportunity to construct affordable housing. There's enough land for us. There's enough opportunity. There's enough community need. The piece that we're lacking is for the province to come to the table on the capital side. We have determined that that's about 25% of a project. The federal government, municipal government, and local community and donations can make up the rest, but we need the province at the table for 25% of the capital. In addition to that, we need the province to come to the table with health care supports for the operations going forward. Without these two pieces, it's impossible to create more stock. If we had that stock, our 1,500 target could be doubled and we could look at creating, just in our organization, a lot more units, and our sector would be empowered to actually create the units we need.

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

I will now go to the official opposition. MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank this round of deputations—I think you've taken us in a different direction than we'd been during the day, and it's a very valuable one.

I promised I would pass to you, Ms. Campagnola, when we started, just given what MPP Bell said. What are some measures that we could introduce, from your perspective, to make housing more affordable?

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: I would just reaffirm that income support levels are inadequate for people who have no other way to be able to pay for their housing than being either on Ontario Works or ODSP, or on a work permit that, again, limits them—they don't get the Canada child benefit, they don't get the Ontario Child Benefit. They don't get access to a lot of the other benefits. We're not here to give them the best life possible, but we must give them protection while they are going through—and establishing their need for protection.

If the province recognizes that the demographics of Ontario include a vulnerable population that has no status, no recourse, no way of changing their situation, then in recognizing that, they must also recognize the supports needed while they are going through that process.

Mr. Joel Harden: Let me try to encapsulate this in a story that may resonate with you. There was a family who came to Ottawa four years ago, fleeing conflict in Africa. Dad was an orthopaedic surgeon, highly successful in the country of origin. Mom was a highly successful public service representative. They fell out of favour with the political current of the day in the country of origin, came to Ottawa—a very familiar Canadian story. For the first year when this family came to our city, their welcome was the Parkdale Food Centre, which is the place they immediately plugged into to volunteer, and their home was the Travelodge motel on Carling Avenue, to which Ottawa pays a significant amount of money per day to house entire families—the last measure I have is 347 families right now; I'm just looking at the dashboard here of the city—where entire families are living in tiny motel rooms, feeding themselves with a microwave, cutting vegetables on the bathroom countertop. Those of us who have ever gone on the road with a hockey team and stayed in one of those—imagine living there permanently. I'm looking here at the dashboard—average length of stay, 100 days; average number of nights used in the last year, 703,000 nights.

We have a health care worker crisis in the province of Ontario. We're desperate for these folks to get in and help seniors and persons with disabilities, to get into our hospitals, long-term-care homes, home care work.

This family I met early in my quest to do this job was struggling in this environment. They only managed to extricate themselves from that with the help of a community organization, rather like the one you work for.

Help me understand the financial case, because my friends in government are often making the financial case for things, and I think it's a valuable one. Why do we spend the province's money—almost sometimes \$2,600 or \$2,800 a month—to house people in motels instead of

finding people housing, particularly so they could have a safe place to get that process going and then, of course, contribute to our country? That's what they want to do. Why do we spend the money the way we're spending the money? Does it make any sense to you? Have you raised this point here at the province or at the city of Toronto?

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: It's a question that we ask all the time.

In our particular situation, we would say that our clients don't even get that; in our region, they are continually turned away, even from emergency shelter, because the province is not willing to pay for refugee claimants to be in emergency shelters. So if any local municipality has a refugee claimant in the shelter, it's because they are going above and beyond and finding means to cover that cost without help from the province.

1640

As a small organization, we work with roughly 2,000 people a year. We are completely donor-funded. We have no access to provincial funding or federal funding for the work that we do because it's refugee claimants. These are people who have, again, had to flee. The fact that they came here on their own, instead of through a refugee camp, is the only difference. And yet they are treated radically differently, as if they have no right to be here.

Mr. Joel Harden: The sad epilogue to the story I told you earlier is that we've lost this family. They're currently in Saskatchewan. Why? Because the dad wanted a shot at one of those few residency jobs that comes up for orthopaedic surgeons trained internationally but who can contribute over there.

I want to move to our friend who was talking about supportive housing, because it seems to me that we also spend a heck of a lot of money right now on homelessness-related police calls. The last number that I have here from the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa is—\$25 million a year from the city of Ottawa was spent on policing costs related to homelessness, instead of figuring out a way to adequately help people on the income side and put people in supportive housing.

I would ask the same question to you: Are we using the money that the people of Ontario give us, their hard-earned tax dollars, to make sure we can actually get people that fair shot, that safe home? What do you think?

Mr. Jeff Neven: The cost of keeping someone homeless far exceeds the cost of supportive housing. Let me give you one example. We opened a 15-unit high-support program in the city of St. Thomas last October. By January, the local police chief attributed our work as reducing the police calls for the entire downtown of St. Thomas by 85%.

Mr. Joel Harden: My goodness.

Mr. Jeff Neven: We also know that, across our organization, when we compare a year and a half prior to moving in to a year and a half after moving in, emergency department visits dropped by half, by 50%. We also know that the highest readmission rate by diagnosis is psychiatric—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final minute.

Mr. Jeff Neven: Each day, our hospitals are treating people, helping people to become healthy and well, and then discharging them to homelessness, only to be re-admitted, sometimes just days later.

The economics are very, very clear: Supportive housing saves us money. It might not save us on day one, but it will certainly start saving us by day 30.

Mr. Joel Harden: Given the thread of the last panel, what I'm going to invite us to consider as a committee is, if we find a way to repurpose existing public buildings which are not being used for their intended purpose because of the new work-from-home environment, the hybrid home environment, we're going to potentially give several opportunities to you, with adequate funding to create potential supportive homes from infrastructure we already have.

Mr. Jeff Neven: Municipalities are ready. I look at their colleagues here, the CEOs in smaller municipalities, and they are ready to go on looking at how they can leverage their assets.

Mr. Joel Harden: That makes a lot of sense to me.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'll just continue my line of questioning to you, Shelley, because I didn't get to you last time.

You're well aware of the housing crisis. Do you think there should be specific housing language in this bill to ensure that the goal of the bill—building homes—gets met?

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: Absolutely. One of our concerns about the bill is that it's not tied to a particular outcome required, and that leaves it open to being applied in a number of situations without end.

My recommendation would be, if it's a 10-year plan on housing, that it's limited to advancing that plan, to be revisited in 10 years to say, "Did it work?" And if it worked in that sector, then we can look at other sectors as well. But to have it open, without clarity around even how a municipality would be designated and under what conditions, leaves it open to applications that maybe were not envisioned, or maybe were envisioned, but were not spoken. So, absolutely, it must be tied to the plan.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: When you say "revisiting"—I'm big on tracking, and we had someone in today who used the famous quote, "What gets measured gets done." I feel we all agree on that same mantra here. So what about tracking on a yearly basis and reporting back in a transparent manner? Do you think that would be a wise move?

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: I might suggest, just because I'm not into too much reporting myself—but reporting on a regular basis, at intervals, would be helpful. Because we are going into an election and people are going to be adjusting, you might not get what you're looking for in the first year—but maybe a biannual review of, "Are we making the progress we were looking for?" with the understanding that it will be kind of like a rolling

effect. In other words, once we get going, it should speed up.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you feel that if we really want to get shovels in the ground and get housing built, we should be looking at all municipalities right now, not just specifically Toronto and Ottawa? We heard today about smaller municipalities really struggling, as well, with the housing crisis.

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: It's my understanding—and it may be limited—that provincial legislation should have provincial jurisdiction and not be limited to just specific municipalities.

Having said that, each municipality has its own character, and I think bringing clarity to how a municipality would be designated for this needs to be clear before such designation happens.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm going to give the OMAA the last word. You were mentioning clarifying the role of heads in senior positions and how to do that. Would you like to elaborate a bit more on your ask of us?

Ms. Margaret Misek-Evans: Certainly. Through the Chair, we did provide to the committee draft legislative wording, complementary legislative wording, whilst the Municipal Act is open for Bill 3 to consider, for introducing clarity to the role of the CAO. As several speakers have alluded to, this particular Bill 3 pertains to Toronto and Ottawa at this moment in time. There are still 442 municipalities where the CAO—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final minute.

Ms. Margaret Misek-Evans: —also requires the clarity and the role definition to be able to serve provincial priorities as well as local priorities.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So you're thinking we need to roll it out beyond Ottawa and Toronto?

Ms. Margaret Misek-Evans: I think the changes to the Municipal Act that would introduce clarity to the role of the CAO should be there for all Ontario municipalities—even Toronto and Ottawa, where the strong-mayor role would play out—simply because, without that kind of clarity, it would be difficult for operations to continue and even for the staff and the community to understand who does what in government.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'll move to the final questions from the government side. MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, I'd like to take this opportunity to applaud two of our charitable organizations, Indwell Community Homes and Compass Refugee Centre.

I can still remember, when I was younger—which was not too long ago—I served as a volunteer for street kids, marginal youth, cage home seniors, Vietnam refugees in refugee camps, so it was just like yesterday to me. I have a strong faith and belief that if a government policy can help to lower the cost of living, it benefits, directly or indirectly, charities and vulnerable people.

So Bill 3 is a tool to help municipalities to reduce development timelines, standardize processes and address local barriers.

My first question is for Indwell: Do you think that Bill 3 would streamline the municipal approval process on new housing?

Mr. Jeff Neven: Thank you so much for the question.

Like any policy, it will be how it's utilized—if we can decrease the time lag, there are certainly cost-benefits with that.

When I look at this bill, there is some potential here. I would caution, though, that the potential of savings and time savings in development is continually offset by the rapidly escalating costs of inflation. I don't see, to be quite frank, unless there's some other provincial legislation change for things like educational development charges—I don't know if you know this, but when we build a 250-square-foot studio apartment, we pay the same as somebody out in the suburbs building a 10,000-square-foot home. Every municipality across Ontario is set so that we can build new suburban schools with those educational development charges.

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So there are other pieces of legislation that can come alongside this piece that will dramatically change the costs of creating affordable housing—that are still needed in addition to this piece.

Mr. Billy Pang: As we mentioned earlier, there's a housing crisis in Ontario. We are using the word "crisis." That means it's not just a concern, just a situation; it's a crisis. That means we have to move way faster than we used to.

What do you think about whether Bill 3 can help increase the supply of affordable housing, especially in the first two cities, which you mentioned, Toronto and Ottawa?

Mr. Jeff Neven: I think there's some real opportunity here to streamline the process. We can move affordable housing projects to the front of the line when it comes to planning permissions and when it comes to building permits. The legislation offers appointment into committees; I'm not sure if that would include committees of adjustment, but projects can get held up for extended amounts of time in committees of adjustment.

I would suggest, though, that the biggest delays that we typically have in inner-city infill projects are actually around environmentals, which aren't covered in this. We need to increase the speed of environmental assessment. That would be another wonderful policy to attach alongside this. It frustrates us when some projects are held up for a year and a half or two years just for the ministry to say, "Yes, we agree with your consultant's report." Why did it need to be held up for two years to say, "Yes, we agree with that report. Go and do that"? This helps. We're desperate on a couple of these other big pieces, to move them quicker.

Mr. Billy Pang: My other question is to Compass Refugee Centre.

You may understand that we need to move, and fast. That's why we put forward Bill 3.

What are some examples so that we as a province can help ensure vulnerable Ontarians have enough housing options, including refugees?

Ms. Shelley Campagnola: Supply is always going to be the answer.

I'm thinking back to 1996, when the United Nations declared homelessness in Canada a crisis. This is not a new crisis. This is a long-standing crisis.

What I see are concerns around if we can enact policy at the provincial level that—I don't want to say "mandate," but can we have policy practice so that regardless of where a refugee or a refugee claimant lands, they have access to the services they need, including emergency shelter, without pushback from local municipalities, which would take funding?

The immediate need for refugees and refugee claimants is actually in temporary housing. Once they get past their process and have resources, moving into permanent housing does happen. It's the first year to two years that are the biggest challenge.

I think the housing crisis has to be not just permanent housing but the whole housing continuum. How do we move people from the time they land in Ontario to the time they are in their own home? Each stage has to be well addressed.

Mr. Billy Pang: Yes, I think that this is the whole process of everything as a whole, which the government policy can help with, in lowering the different costs.

I'm not forgetting you, OMAA.

Bill 3, if passed, along with associated regulations, would empower the heads of council in Toronto and Ottawa, and give them more tools to deliver on shared provincial and municipal priorities. This proposal would provide the mayor with the flexibility to choose to appoint a CAO. I hear that's your concern—that the mayor could

also choose to dedicate his power to the council. In the proposed legislation, there are several accountability and transparency requirements—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final 60 seconds.

Mr. Billy Pang:—including requirements for mayors to exercise their new powers in writing, and new rules in the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.

Do you have any comments on these accountability and transparency requirements?

Ms. Margaret Misek-Evans: I'll start and invite my colleagues to chime in.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have thirty seconds left, just to give you a warning.

Ms. Margaret Misek-Evans: Okay. We've refrained from commenting on Bill 3. I think, really, we're here to advocate for complementary changes to the Municipal Act that would maintain the integrity of the apolitical arm of municipal government, which is the professional administration, to ensure all of the government services that we deliver are delivered fairly and with a degree of separation from the elected officials so that they can be maintained in a consistent fashion.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm afraid we're out of time.

Thank you to all the presenters this afternoon.

I'm just going to do a couple of reminders here. The deadline for written submissions is 7 p.m. today, Monday, August 29, 2022. The deadline for filing amendments to Bill 3 is noon on Tuesday, August 30, 2022.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, August 31. Thank you, everyone.

The committee adjourned at 1656.

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