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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

HE-21

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-21

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

Helping Homebuyers,
Protecting Tenants Act, 2023

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Wednesday 10 May 2023

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

Loi de 2023
visant à aider les acheteurs
et à protéger les locataires

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mercredi 10 mai 2023

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**

Wednesday 10 May 2023

Mercredi 10 mai 2023

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

**HELPING HOMEBUYERS,
PROTECTING TENANTS ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023
VISANT À AIDER LES ACHETEURS
ET À PROTÉGER LES LOCATAIRES**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development/ Projet de loi 97, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement.

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 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast 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?

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER
AND RESPONSES**

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Our first presenter is the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Steve Clark. Welcome. You have 20 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 40 minutes for questions and answers, divided into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of five minutes for the independent members. Any questions?

I will now call on Minister Clark. You have 20 minutes to begin your presentation. Please go ahead.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm honoured to provide the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy with really important details about our government's proposed Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. It's the latest step in our efforts to tackle Ontario's housing supply crisis and to keep our commitment as a government that we build 1.5 million homes by 2031. I'm proud of the fact that Ontarians really entrusted

us with a strong mandate to work towards that goal and I'm also incredibly proud of the progress that our government has made to date.

We've introduced a bold and transformative agenda over the past several years to increase housing supply. We're seeing that our initiatives are providing a positive impact and the example that I'll use for members this morning is that, in the last two years, housing starts in Ontario have reached a level that we've not seen in the last 30 years. Just last year, rental housing starts reached an all-time high in our province. These positive trends are a result of the policies that our government has championed, but we know that much more needs to be done to help us reach our goal. That's why we've committed to updating and revising our housing supply action plan every year until 2026 so that we can continue to make progress towards that goal.

Our proposed Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act and related measures support increased density and building more homes in existing communities while making sure that there's enough land available for the many new homes and jobs that our province needs. We're making life easier for tenants while supporting landlords and we're committed to helping first-time homebuyers. We aim to help people from all walks of life find housing, from young people to newcomers, to families and seniors. But I want to tell members of the committee this morning that achieving that goal is not going to be easy. We're counting on the support of both our federal colleagues and our municipal partners so that we can increase housing supply in communities right across this province.

Since introducing the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, we've received an outpouring of support. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has said that it's pleased and that it "recognizes the full continuum of housing and attempts to make life easier for renters..." The Ontario Real Estate Association—many of you refer to them as OREA—commended our government on supporting prospective homeowners, renters and rental housing providers, while adopting the targeted approach to deliver on our goal of 1.5 million homes by 2031. And, recently, I had the chance to speak about aspects of our plan with representatives of the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, and I was so pleased to hear the feedback that we received at those meetings.

With your indulgence, Chair, I want to take some of the remaining time that I have to go into some of the details of the overall plan of our Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants plan. One of the key pillars of our plan centres around proposals to further strengthen protections for renters. One of our proposed changes would clarify and enhance the rights of tenants to install air conditioning in their units. If passed, landlords would have to allow their tenants to install air conditioning units in accordance with some basic provisions meant to ensure health and safety. I'm very pleased that our government is proposing this measure. I believe it responds to the calls that have been made by tenants and their advocates to ensure that Ontario tenants are able to be safe and comfortable within their homes.

But that's not the only thing that is in this proposed legislation that we're doing to support tenants; we're also proposing changes to protect tenants from evictions due to renovations and landlords' own use of the rental unit, and the example I'll use is, when a tenant has to vacate a unit that is being renovated, we will require a landlord to provide the tenant with a report from a qualified person—potentially, an engineer or an architect—that the unit must be vacant for the renovations to take place. For tenants who are exercising their first right of refusal, the landlord must give them updates in writing on the status of the renovations and give that tenant a 60-day grace period to move back into the unit once renovations are complete, at a similar rent.

If the landlord doesn't abide by our proposed rules, the tenant would be able to file a complaint with the Landlord and Tenant Board, and the tenant would have two years after moving out, or six months after the renovations are complete, whichever is longer, to do that, and if a landlord chooses to use the unit for themselves or a family member, our proposed changes will require the landlord or the family member to move into that unit in a specific timeline. That deadline will be prescribed in a future regulation, once the bill is passed.

We're also proposing, in the bill, to double the maximum fines for offences under the Residential Tenancies Act, such as bad-faith evictions. The new maximum fines would be \$100,000 for individuals, \$500,000 for corporations, and those maximums will be the highest in Canada for residential tenancy offences.

Chair, I want to restate that our government's goal is to create those 1.5 million homes by 2031, and towards this end, we've done a number of things. We've called on the federal government to defer the harmonized sales tax on all large-scale, purpose-built rental housing building. The reason we've done that is we believe this measure would help to spur on construction of more rental housing while helping to create jobs, encourage economic development and to support growth.

I want to remind the committee members that our housing supply action plans build on each other. For example, in More Homes Built Faster, last fall, we introduced changes to help homebuilders replace older rental apartments with larger, more modern, more efficient rental

buildings. Our intent all along was to help increase the supply of purpose-built rental in Ontario and ensure that tenants have guaranteed access to their homes with amenities that offer safety and comfort, and I'm glad to report that the proposals in this latest housing supply action plan do exactly that.

Currently, municipalities have the option to establish bylaws which regulate what developers can do when demolishing or converting these buildings, such as requiring those existing units be replaced. For those municipalities that do have these bylaws, our proposed Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act would give the minister authority that could be used to make regulations to require replacement units to have the same core features as the original units. Core features, for example, would be the number of bedrooms that would be in a unit.

Regulations could also require also require that displaced tenants are given compensation and have the right to move into the new replacement unit at a similar rent. This balanced approach would ensure that if tenants move out of a two-bedroom apartment, they move back into a two-bedroom apartment, and if they move out of an apartment paying a certain rent, they pay a similar rent when they move back in. The big difference, of course, is that they're going to access a modern, comfortable apartment, and I think we can all agree this should be a critical part in protecting tenants.

0910

Chair, I want to turn from those measures to a critically important issue that I flagged—certain circumstances where our proposed changes would allow tenants to have more flexibility when taking cases to the Landlord and Tenant Board. And, yes, we all know that the LTB has a sizable backlog of cases before it. So we've made a decision and an announcement, as part of launching this bill, as a way to reduce active applications and improve client service for its applicants.

As we've all heard, the government has made a decision to appoint 40 additional adjudicators and additional administrative staff to the LTB. It doubles those full-time adjudicators. The resources will help the board expedite the residential dispute resolution process and support the overall housing challenges that we're facing across the province. We're also proposing that the plain-language form provided to the Landlord and Tenant Board must be used for repayment agreements when a tenant is paying arrears. The intent is to ensure that all parties understand their rights and their responsibilities, and it responds to many calls that we've heard both from MPPs and from the public.

So I've given you details on the benefits to renters in the plan; I want to talk about another aspect of the plan with my remaining few minutes, and that's what we're offering to homebuyers. For example, the first home savings account is a new type of registered savings plan the federal government has introduced for Canadians that provides tax benefits for people saving for their first home. The new registered plan would give prospective first-time homebuyers the ability to save \$40,000 on a tax-free basis,

similar to a registered retirement savings plan. And because of these benefits, our government is proposing to expand unlimited deposit insurance to these accounts in Ontario credit unions and caisses populaires to treat them consistently with other registered accounts.

We're also consulting, through my colleague the Honourable Kaleed Rasheed, on a cooling-off period when people purchase a new freehold home from a builder in an upcoming consultation that he's announced as part of this bill. This would allow homebuyers to cancel their purchase agreement in a specified time period.

Of course, there are many things we need to consider when we're increasing housing supply. In addition, we believe as a government that there should be appropriate planning policies in place to support growth throughout the province to respond to market needs while recognizing the concept that one size doesn't fit all. And as I said earlier, we've talked to delegations in northern Ontario at both the NOMA and FONOM conference. We've heard from them loud and clear, as I've heard from other Ontarians in all parts of the province, that we need a planning statement that recognizes all of Ontario, not just the GTA, and should be equipped for growth. In our proposed provincial planning statement, all municipalities are going to be required to provide a range and mix of housing. We're proposing to enable greater flexibility to build homes in rural areas while minimizing the impacts on agriculture.

We also want our 29 fastest-growing municipalities to be required to plan for growth in major transit station areas and other strategic growth areas, for example, downtowns. Ensuring adequate density in these areas is all part of the plan to address Ontario's transit needs with a comprehensive approach to focus on housing and at the same time we want to encourage growth, we need to protect our resources. Under the PPS, we would have a map and designate prime ag lands to support our agri-food network. We would also encourage municipalities to adopt a watershed planning approach to protect water resources while facilitating new home construction.

Similarly, aggregate resources must be protected. They're essential to building our growing community. Therefore, we want to propose to create consistent requirements for aggregate extraction to ensure fairness between expansions and new applications.

Chair, how much time have I got left?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Seven minutes, basically.

Hon. Steve Clark: Perfect; right on schedule.

As part of More Homes for Everyone, we made changes to the Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act. We require municipalities to gradually refund fees, zoning bylaw applications and site plan applications. This would apply only to cases where the municipality failed to make a decision within a specified time period. We listened to feedback that we received from our municipal partners. We've postponed the start date from January 1 to July 1 of this year in order to give municipalities adequate time to adjust.

Municipalities told us as part of our consultations with them that some smaller projects need to be able to address the type of concerns included in a site plan review—smaller projects like housing near train tracks. We are therefore proposing to allow municipalities to use site plan control for residential projects within 10 or fewer units in very specific circumstances. Again, we listened to our municipal partners with their feedback, and we've adjusted this bill accordingly.

Our government's proposed Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act and its corresponding plan include a list of measures we believe as a government will tackle the housing supply crisis. We are course-correcting a number of items but at the same time continue to consult Ontarians, and we're looking forward to committee deliberations here to get further feedback from individuals.

We need to get closer to help our province build our housing supply target. We need those 1.5 billion homes by 2031, and we need to continue, as I said in my opening address, to build upon the success of some of our other plans. We have seen in the last two years a significant amount of development, but we know that we need to continue to work collaboratively with municipalities and with the federal government.

Our proposals in this bill today help renters, they help home buyers, they help those who are living both in urban centres and in rural municipalities. They help young people, they help seniors, but we know we will need help. No single government, municipal, provincial or federal, can solve this housing supply crisis alone. We need to continue to work together.

I've indicated some measures today that we've altered based on the feedback we've received. We're counting on our municipal and our federal partners to be part of the solution. We need to work in partnership, and we need to be able to put that plan in place to create the climate so that we can meet our goal.

Happy to take questions. I just wanted to recognize my deputy, Kate Manson-Smith, who is here today. I believe very strongly she's the best deputy minister in government, and I wanted to make sure I said that on the record today. Thanks, Deputy, for being here.

I'll turn it back to you, Chair.

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

We'll now move to the opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Bell, please.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Minister, for coming in today. Over the last five years, the Conservatives have moved forward with a housing plan that is not working. Housing has never been more expensive to buy. Housing has never been more expensive to rent. The Conservatives' decision to allow more sprawl on greenbelt land and farmland is not addressing the housing affordability crisis or the housing supply crisis, and many Ontarians are very concerned with the direction this government is going.

My first question is focused on the Conservatives' insistence that Toronto's and other municipalities' right-to-return policies should be significantly weakened. Today

there's going to be a protest at 25 St. Mary Street. Long-term tenants are very worried that their building is going to be demolished and replaced by a large condo—not a purpose-built rental but a condo—which is typically what happens. They're very worried they're never going to be able to return to their rent-controlled apartments and continue to live in the neighbourhood that they call home. This isn't just happening at 25 St. Mary Street; it's happening in over 60 buildings all across Toronto right now. The city fears, many municipalities fear, that the decision to eliminate the right-to-return policies will make it easier for developers to look at purpose-built rentals, demolish them and replace them with luxury condos and continue this trend we are seeing where affordable private-market rentals are being demolished in our city.

The city has come out with a report today. I'm going to quote it: "The city report raises fears that new potential regulations"—in Bill 97, Minister, that you're introducing—"would allow replacement units to be smaller, limit the city's ability to restrict rents, reduce compensation tenants receive while waiting to move back in, allow developers to provide cash instead of new units, and/or create a new definition of affordable housing," which isn't affordable.

This is a question for you, Minister: How are you going to change Toronto's rental replacement law?

0920

Hon. Steve Clark: We consulted municipalities. Some of the concerns that were expressed about rental replacement have obviously been addressed through this legislation. Groups like AMO—I'm encouraged by some of the comments that AMO have made about our rent replacement, that the framework that's being proposed on rental replacement bylaws avoids discouraging municipalities from enacting bylaws like this but provides a framework for increasing housing stock and, at the same time, protecting tenants.

The city of Toronto's bylaw states that council can impose conditions on the approval of demolition application, including, but not limited to, requirements to replace the rental units at similar rents. That's the same concept that we're proposing with Bill 97. The tenant relocation piece, including the right to return to replacement rental housing, remains consistent.

I haven't seen this report that you're talking about, but certainly the intent of Bill 97 is to ensure that there is protection for existing tenants and that they'll be able to move back to a modern, renovated apartment with the same core features—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister—

Hon. Steve Clark: —like bedrooms—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Chair, I'm going to take back my time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes. MPP Bell, please.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. I'm going to get specific. I did hear very clearly—I read the regulation. We've all read the regulation. I've got some specific questions. Are you going to allow cities, municipalities, to compensate

tenants while they're waiting for construction to be completed? That's my first question. The second question is: How is the right to return going to be enforced? Is it going to be through the Landlord and Tenant Board—because that process is broken—or are you going to allow the municipality to enforce the right to return? Those are my two specific questions.

Hon. Steve Clark: Okay. The tenant protections continue to be in place under the Residential Tenancies Act. For tenants who are facing the situation where a rental replacement will take place, there needs to be the same provisions in terms of notice. We continue to hear from the city and from others to include those same basic principles.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The compensation piece, Minister.

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, we want to ensure that a tenant moves back at a similar rent in that modern apartment. So the initial concern that a number of tenants' groups presented with the previous bill—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Chair, I would like to cede back my time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Hold on, hold on.

Hon. Steve Clark: —are not valid. We've listened.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister. Yes, MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm just going to summarize. You didn't answer the question around compensation, and you implied that the process for the right to return will be through the Residential Tenancies Act, which means it's through the Landlord and Tenant Board.

I'm going to get to another piece around Bill 97, which is moved by the Conservatives to increase fines for corporations and individuals who violate the Residential Tenancies Act. The goal of that is to stop the big increase in illegal evictions that we are seeing in Ontario today. I'm going to flesh that out a bit.

The current system for allowing tenants to get back into an apartment if they've been illegally evicted is broken. The number of tenants that get back into an apartment if they've been illegally evicted is essentially zero, if they use the Landlord and Tenant Board process, and the number of landlords that legally evict and are fined is next to nothing. I've spoken to experts; they say maybe 20 landlords have been fined in the last few years. It doesn't happen. Why is this government choosing to double down on an eviction protection strategy that evidence shows very clearly is not working?

Hon. Steve Clark: I don't understand your question, MPP Bell—

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is basic residential tenancy stuff. Tenants don't get back into an apartment if they are illegally evicted, and landlords don't get fined.

Hon. Steve Clark: Okay, so you don't support the section on increased fines. I understand what you're saying. You don't agree with the section—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Chair, I'd like to cede back my time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Bell, you have run out of your time. Thank you very much.

I'll now go to the government side. Yes, MPP Smith, please. Thank you.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you. Through you, Chair—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To your questions.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you. Through you, Chair—
Interjections.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'm starting with the government side. I'll come back to you later.

Go ahead, please, MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Chair, I want to thank the minister and his team for being here today and providing us with information. I remember when I was much younger and I had to buy my first home, and it was a very scary concept. It was the largest purchase of my life. I was bringing new children into the home. I wanted to make sure that it was a sure thing, and it was going to be for a long time. I understand Ontarians, I understand people who walk into my constituency office who want to make sure that there are protections. I've dealt with a number of files where people really want to build for their family, but they don't feel that they're in a position to do that right now.

It's interesting, because one of the factories nearby—their biggest issue is probably housing. They just don't have housing. There's no other issue other than we need to produce some housing so that we can have people live in the neighbourhoods where they can work, live and do everything they do.

I was particularly interested in the information regarding first-home savings accounts, which is a federal plan. I wanted you to elaborate on the measures that the government is taking to help homebuyers and protect them.

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes, and I appreciate the question. As part of our bill, we made a number of other announcements, and I was pleased to join the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery at a couple of announcements where our province is moving with other provinces and territories to modify legislation so that we can include credit unions and caisses populaires in that new account, which I think is something that just reflects provincial and territorial changes, that they regulate the banks and we deal with some other lenders. So we need to ensure that first-time homebuyers have that option.

The other consultation that speaks to the consumer protection piece is the consultation that his ministry is looking at in terms of a cooling-off period, which is something that in other provinces and territories has been an open and active conversation with Ontarians. And I think it's that balance, right? We need to have that consumer protection piece, and his ministry provides consumer protection services for a wide variety of products. We've worked closely together in the past, his ministry and mine, on other protection measures in other bills, and I hope that we'll continue to work together, that in future bills that we would bring forward, we would have an aspect of consumer protection, because I think that's very important. If we're going to be building to the degree that we're proposing to build, we're going to need to have that balance

moving forward, so Minister Rasheed's ministry needs to be right at the forefront, talking to Ontarians about challenges and hurdles and obstacles that are being put in the way.

So I think having that first-time homebuyer account, while it is relatively new, to be able to be reflective of people who rely on credit unions and caisses populaires—I think it's a smart move by the government. I look forward to, in future bills, having further consultations, so what Minister Rasheed finds from his cooling-off period consultation might make it into a future bill this year, or it might make it into a red tape bill that our government has committed to doing every spring and fall. So I think it's a very important piece.

0930

Ms. Laura Smith: I was interested in the possibility of a cooling-off period. I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about that.

Hon. Steve Clark: As Minister Rasheed said at the announcement, people are making the decision—it's the biggest purchase of their lives. You want to make sure that you have that opportunity to have that protection in case there's a situation that happens. Other provinces have investigated this. I think it's a really, really smart way of doing things that we would include this consultation when we're dealing with housing supply. It just seems to go hand in hand.

The feedback we've received from the public has been tremendous. I just hope we can hit the ground running and get the consultation started and encourage all members of the House to get involved in that and organize something in your local community to talk to prospective homebuyers on what it would look like and how it would be administered. I think my challenge, on behalf of Minister Rasheed, is that when the consultation begins, let's engage it on the ground in our local neighbourhoods.

Ms. Laura Smith: I'm going to circle back and ask a question about the Landlord and Tenant Board because this is such an important issue for all of our locations. This is a consistent issue that we face: People walk into our constituency offices and there's a file. They can't get things accomplished, and they feel that the wheels are slowing. People have particularly felt this during COVID. They can't get the LTB files through, and there are a lot of unethical actors who are taking advantage of the situation.

Can the minister elaborate on some of the effective plans to protect both the tenants and the bad actors and the critical issues that seem to be reported at the landlord and tenant level?

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes. It's a good question. I've been very open about my praise for the Attorney General about stopping evictions in the middle of the pandemic. Minister Downey saved lives by making that decision. But, as we know, the backlog increased significantly. I don't know about folks in the room—I'm assuming the same people that have emailed me in my constituency office to fix the LTB have emailed all of you. The number one thing in all of those emails—I could go in on a Sunday night before I drive to Toronto and have 250 emails over the weekend.

These were all from small landlords asking us to hire more adjudicators and more administrative staff to deal with the backlog. I've had tenants, the same way, very frustrated with the situation.

You touched on it, MPP Smith, about people that are not dealing above board. It's important for all of us to have a working tribunal, one that hears cases in a reasonable amount of time. It's good for both sides, no matter whether you're—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister. That concludes the questions from the government side for this round.

I'll now go to MPP McMahon. MPP McMahon, it's at the discretion of the Chair, rotation of questions. You have five minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure. I just didn't know that ahead of time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I understand. You have five minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you for your words, Minister Clark. I'm just wondering, first of all, can you give us your thoughts on whether you think housing prices are market-driven rather than determined by developers?

Hon. Steve Clark: I think there are a number of factors that I'm concerned about, MPP McMahon. I'm concerned that the fees and charges that are being levied are too high. I think in the GTA, they add about \$116,900 to the cost of a home. I think some of the charges in some municipalities—I think Brampton and Mississauga are up closer to \$125,000 or \$126,000. I think we have to look at the baseline costs of housing and deal with those high fees. Our government, in one of our previous bills made a decision—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That's great, thanks.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm glad you support it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: No, it's great that your answer is over now.

Just looking at the submission from the chief planner of Toronto, who has years of experience, of course, and education, I'm wondering what your thoughts are on what their submission stated. For example, they recommended that the effective date of the fee refunds be extended to December 31, 2023. Thoughts on that?

Hon. Steve Clark: We responded to a number of municipal officials who engaged us after Bill 23. As I said in my address, originally we wanted to bring those in on January 1 and I announced earlier this year that we were going to extend that to July 1. That's what is reaffirmed in this bill. We feel July 1 is a—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, so that's a no. All right. How about their recommendation—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP McMahon—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a very short period of time—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP McMahon, I am speaking now, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a short period of time and—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I am the Chair of the meeting. Let me finish, please. For the process that we are following, ask your question and let's listen to the answer. Don't cut off the answer.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a short period of time, Chair, with all due respect—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I understand that. We've stopped the clock.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sometimes the answer is dragged out intentionally. That's my concern. That is my right. With a short period of time, I can have rapid-fire questions and I expect the presenter to be courteous and mindful of my short period of time to have succinct answers—with all due respect, Chair.

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair, I can barely clear my throat in three minutes.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All I am suggesting is that we try to maintain order and due decorum in the process of the committee. I don't want to remind committee members again. Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Excuse me, Chair. Could I also ask that you assist me if you notice the answers are extraordinarily lengthy? If you could assist me on that.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I will do that. You have two minutes and 49 seconds. Thank you very much.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. My next question, which is timely, is, what do you think of city staff's recommending the legislation include stop-the-clock provisions to recognize the iterative planning process of back-and-forth discussions?

Hon. Steve Clark: I think there are studies out there that have shown that it takes too long to pull building permits in Ontario. I believe very firmly that, as a government, we need to ensure that our municipal partners make those decisions quickly and that the process is consistent among all municipalities in Ontario. We're trying to streamline the development approval process and we will continue to do that. That's a priority for the government.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure, thank you. Do respect planners in Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes. I had a recent meeting with OPPI and I am quite concerned that we don't have enough planners. I have written to Minister McNaughton and Minister Dunlop suggesting that we get a plan in place to have more planners. I think we especially need to have a planning program in northern Ontario, something that I've spoken to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan about when we were up at the NOMA conference.

I appreciate the statistics—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, why remove some of their powers then?

Hon. Steve Clark: I appreciate some of their work. I appreciate their work, I want to clarify that, but I do think we need more planners and I've advocated on their behalf to my ministerial colleagues.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one minute left.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do respect conservancy authorities in Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: I do, yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Could you elaborate on that?

Hon. Steve Clark: You just asked me to shorten my answers, so I'm trying—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Because your actions speak differently, I guess I would say.

Interjection: That's not a question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It actually is a question, thank you. Why not be more courageous? Four units per lot, upzoning main streets: Why are you so afraid to make hard decisions in established neighbourhoods with regard to planning and building housing?

Hon. Steve Clark: I've said before this committee in the past that our Housing Affordability Task Force is our long-range planning document. We committed to Ontarians in the election in 2022, that our government under the leadership of Premier Ford, which would be re-elected, would have a housing supply action plan—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister. That concludes the questions from the independent.

0940

We now go to the official opposition. MPP Bell, please.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Chair. Back to the minister: I hope you can appreciate some of the frustration that we feel. We hear it from our residents. Across Ontario, rent is alarmingly high. In Toronto, it has reached \$3,000 a month. You need to earn over \$100,000 to afford to live in Toronto, and I don't know how on earth anyone can afford to pay the bills and save up enough money to buy a home when you are paying \$3,000 a month just to live in an apartment in Toronto. That's where our frustration and where Ontarians' frustration is coming from. We fear the Conservatives have decided that investors, big developers and corporate landlords are more important than affordability and the well-being of Ontario's renters. It is very concerning.

I want to go back to some of the remarks you made when Bill 97 was introduced. I was troubled by Minister Clark's—your—refusal to confirm that you won't open up the greenbelt any further even though Ontarians have been very clear that they want the Conservatives to keep their promise and protect the greenbelt. Can you rule out any further removals of land from the greenbelt, yes or no?

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair, I just want to reiterate that this bill does not deal with any greenbelt policy whatsoever. The member knows that protections for the greenbelt have not changed with Bill 97. We've made no significant changes dealing with environmental policy—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Chair, I'd like to cede my time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Hold on, Minister.

Yes?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to cede my time.

I do want to be clear that when you introduced the bill—when the minister introduced the bill—when you were asked questions about this issue, and during the press conference you were asked questions about this, and you refused to commit to not opening up the greenbelt any further, and it is extremely concerning.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order, Chair.

Ms. Jessica Bell:

I'll move on to another question, Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I have a point of order. MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Yes. Just pursuant to standing order 25(b), I think the member is directing the questions—their speech—to matters other than the question under discussion. I would just ask the member to get back to the topic of the bill.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right, thank you, MPP McGregor. I'm going to give MPP Bell a bit of latitude in her line of questioning, but if she starts to stray a little bit further, then I will intercede.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Related to Bill 97 and the growth plan, which you did reference in your opening remarks, Minister, I was very concerned by the Conservatives' decision to double down on sprawl by proposing to eliminate any new mandatory density requirements for new subdivisions, any new density requirements for municipalities—and this government is also eliminating intensification targets. This government talks a good talk about how they want to increase density, how they want to build missing middle, so why is this government choosing to eliminate density requirements in the new proposed provincial planning statement?

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair, the minimum density target requirements in the proposed provincial policy statement are minimum standards. Municipalities may go beyond the minimum standard to address matters of importance in their specific community unless doing so would conflict with another policy. To increase the supply of housing, we need to leverage infrastructure and servicing investments. The proposed policy direction, including minimum density targets for several different types of areas within municipalities—including major transit stations, other strategic growth areas, settlement area boundary expansion lands—some of these are mandatory, and others are not. So there are going to be, in the proposal, some requirements and some encouragements to municipalities.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Chair, I'd like to cede back my time.

I hope that you are reading the proposed provincial planning statement, because mandatory targets and requirements have been eliminated, and they've been replaced with words like “encourage.”

I want to get to something very specific about Bill 97, which is that the minister is giving themselves the power to force a landowner to sign a secret agreement with the ministry or a municipality on what can happen on their land, and also force them to pay costs through the new facilitator process.

My initial thought was that every landowner in Ontario should be very worried about this Big Brother behaviour.

Does that mean the Conservatives are going to force landowners to develop their own land against their will and then pay the costs for doing it, and if it doesn't mean that, what does it mean?

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes, I've read some of your comments, MPP Bell, in the House. I need to explain the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator. That's an office that's appointed by me and my ministry. Their office helps, obviously, the province, but they also help municipalities, developers, businesses and community groups, help resolve related growth management issues, land use issues, infrastructure planning, environmental protection and other matters specified by the minister. They provide facilitation services, and they act in some cases as a negotiator by the province. This has been a very helpful office to not just myself but to past Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Chair, I'd like to cede my time. I asked a very specific question—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Bell, you've got a minute and 31 seconds.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, and I'll use it.

Hon. Steve Clark: And I answered your question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: No. I asked a very specific question—

Hon. Steve Clark: I stated—

Ms. Jessica Bell: I asked a very specific question—

Hon. Steve Clark: MPP Bell, with all due respect—

Ms. Jessica Bell:—about Bill 97 and a schedule that some people are concerned about: What does it mean if a facilitator comes in and forces a landowner to sign an agreement with the ministry or municipality? And unfortunately your answer did not allay concerns.

I want to address the matter of inclusionary zoning. Many municipalities, including the city of Toronto, have developed plans to require inclusionary zoning, so when a new development is built, a percentage of the homes that are built are affordable. It's a way for everybody to pay their fair share and contribute to the housing affordability crisis, including developers. Unfortunately, the province has made a decision to sit on those inclusionary zoning laws and not allow the city of Toronto to move forward with them. When are you going to allow the city to proceed with its inclusionary zoning rules so we can build affordable housing?

Hon. Steve Clark: We continue to work with our municipal partners as we implement the measures in Bill 23. We believe that affordable housing, non-profit housing, family-sized purpose-built rentals should be exempt or partially exempt from development charges—

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to cede my time. You're not answering the question. It's a simple yes-or-no question—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Your time is just about concluded. It's down to one second. Thank you, Minister. Thank you, MPP Bell.

We'll now go to the government side. Can I see a hand up, please. MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Good morning, Minister. Before my questions, I want to just thank you for all the

work that you've have done and also thank your team, the deputy and her team, your office staff as well. I think this is a fifth bill that's before this committee coming from MMAH, and I'd be accused of bias if I said you were the best ministry, but you're certainly, I think, the hardest-working and this committee definitely appreciates that.

As a tenant, I also want to thank you for the protections that you put in during COVID. I was a tenant during COVID, and I can say on my behalf and friends of mine and other tenants in Ontario that that assurance that the government had their backs couldn't have meant more. I was fortunate enough to be employed throughout the duration of COVID. Many people in my community, many of my residents and many of my friends were not. So having that assurance around evictions, certainty around pricing and that kind of thing, did not go unnoticed by tenants in Ontario, and certainly we appreciate that.

I want to talk a little bit about NIMBYism. I think this is one of the most growing, insidious movements in our politics, where I guess residents of a neighbourhood think that only they're allowed to enjoy that neighbourhood, and the lowest form of politicking is for a candidate to go to a neighbourhood and say, "You know what? We're never going to let anybody else move here." We know Canada is a country that is better because of its diversity and because of its immigration, not in spite of its diversity and immigration. We need more diversity, more cultures to come into Canada, not less.

0950

When we see politicians catering to these NIMBY interests, it causes concern. I point to my own neighbourhood, my own neck of the woods, in Peel region. We recently saw around an MTSA in Mississauga a few high towers that basically got delayed and are being delayed by the municipality around a transit station area in Port Credit because of concerns like shadows or character of the neighbourhood, which we know is coded language for a lot of these NIMBY concerns.

I know our changes to the planning statement are focused on unlocking that density around MTSA's. Could you maybe walk the committee through a little bit of the motive behind that, why we are so gung-ho on density around major transit station areas and why that's an important part of the bill that members should support?

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, MPP McGregor. I agree that we've got tremendous staff at the ministry and I just want to thank them for all the work that they've done. You can't bring as many housing supply action plans as we have in the ministry without stopping for a moment and thanking them for their work. I appreciate you reaching out and saying that.

We believe that Ontario's fastest-growing municipalities really need to focus on success. If we're going to meet that housing supply target of 1.5 million homes by 2031, we need, particularly, those fast-growing communities to really fire on all cylinders.

The proposed provincial policy statement requires—and you will hear me use the words "requires" and "encourage" periodically throughout this—the large and

fast-growing municipalities to plan major transit station areas on higher order transit lines. We want to achieve a minimum density target of 200 jobs and people per hectare for those MTSA's served by subways; a minimum density target of 160 jobs and people per hectare for those MTSA's served by light rail or bus rapid transit; and a minimum density target of 150 jobs and people per hectare for those MTSA's served by commuter or intercity rail.

Here's where I talk about encouraging: We're encouraging all other municipalities to establish those minimum density targets for MTSA's on higher order transit areas. So you're going to see, if you delve into the proposal, an encouragement of all municipalities to establish minimum density targets on other major transit station areas. An example I'll give you is an area around a major bus depot in an urban core.

There are some changes and some flexibilities. Really, it creates a situation where one size doesn't fit all, where a community that has only a certain higher order transit can still deal with density in a responsible way. But, again, in terms of the largest and fastest-growing municipalities, we're requiring them to establish minimum density targets on some of their other strategic growth areas while encouraging all other municipalities to establish them as well.

It's a give-and-take, but it's very important for us as we move forward. We need to ensure that those biggest communities—but we want to as well deal with some of those other, smaller communities, like the ones that I talked about where I was at OSUM and NOMA and FONOM, where municipalities have said, "We want to grow too."

Mr. Graham McGregor: I appreciate that, Minister, and thanks for the collaborative approach to municipalities and for your stance against NIMBYism. I'll give the rest of my time to Mr. Holland.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Holland, you have one minute and 51 seconds.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I'll talk quick. I just want to thank you for being here. As you indicated, we are in a housing crisis, more acutely felt in the urban centres, but there is a rural impact and rural component to this.

The previous Liberal government was very urban-centric, with their "housing policies and directives," and it negatively impacted on rural and northern communities particularly. I want to give credit to the government for AMO, ROMA, NOMA and FONOM in the consultations. We heard earlier, with regard to intensification, I think what's being lost here is that intensification means different things in different parts of the province and in different types of municipalities. I think this act addresses that.

Could you speak to how this bill is addressing the housing crisis across rural Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: I think that's a great question, MPP Holland. We were up in Thunder Bay at NOMA, and I just came from Parry Sound this week—stopped in Brantford for OSUM, and we have our ongoing conversations with AMO as well—I was at Ontario Big City Mayors in Kitchener too. Up north particularly, people were very interested in the PPS piece. Municipalities want to grow; they just grow in different ways, right?

What we heard in Thunder Bay—Minister Surma and I got to look at one big parcel of provincially owned land that you can argue, with the right collaboration with the city of Thunder Bay, could provide some really innovative housing opportunities as part of our attainable housing plan.

I was very much encouraged by the questions that we received in the minister's bear-pit session. You know better than anybody we had a record amount of ministers there—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister. That concludes the government side's questions. Thank you, sir.

MPP McMahon, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Back to the submission from the city with your definition of the area of employment: The city says they do not support the revised definition as it has the potential to remove approximately 25% of the city's employment areas, and this potentially puts at risk approximately 150,000 jobs currently found in these areas. Your comments on that?

Hon. Steve Clark: Having a consultation as part of the streamlining of the provincial policy statement and the growth plan—A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe—is very important, so we value the comments from all of our municipal partners, including the city of Toronto. We want to make sure that as part of the consultation, we hear from them about the impacts, so we're going to continue to listen as we move forward.

But I want to tell you something, MPP McMahon: I know you're a former Toronto city councillor, you live in Toronto, but not everybody thinks that all of our policies need to be Toronto-centric. We need to place a housing plan that gives opportunities in all 444 municipalities. Whether it be the city of Toronto's planning department or a councillor in northern Ontario, we want them to have the same opportunity to provide comment on future planning policies.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure. I just thought you would be worried about losing 150,000 jobs.

But anyway, the next submission is from the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario alumni, and they're saying, "We are unclear as to why site plan control is being removed for smaller sized developments." Do you care to comment on that?

Hon. Steve Clark: We, in Bill 23—well, actually, in Bill 97, we're bringing back the right for certain developments. The example I used in my speech to the committee was near a railway. So as part of the consultation for Bill 23, we course-corrected on a couple of things.

We also heard—I see MPP Quinn. We heard, when we were in his municipality, about waterfront development, so we made a change based on the comments that we received. Again, we're in the middle of a consultative process as part of this committee's deliberations, so I look forward to hearing comments from the other deputants. I'm kicking things off—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure. Okay. Great. I know what you're doing.

My next question, if you don't mind: They're also unclear as to why watershed-based planning is being significantly compromised by the province, including conservation authority roles. So, comments on that?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Chair, through you to MPP McMahon, we're going to continue to consult all of our partners.

I had a chance to talk to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry briefly up in his home riding up in Parry Sound for FONOM, and I know he's continuing to consult. He's got a posting as well as part of the PPS review. So again, if people have comments like the ones that MPP McMahon is articulating, we encourage people to use the PPS posting to provide us their views, suggestions and proposed changes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. Could you provide us with your definition of "consultation?"

Hon. Steve Clark: Well, in terms of the PPS, we have a posting that encourages Ontarians to provide comments. Consultation takes many forms. I'm not sure what you're getting at, but over the last five years we've had round tables, we've had public meetings, we've had open forums and we've had postings. We've solicited written and oral submissions. We've done in-person meetings. We've done Zoom meetings. We've done meetings in the north, meetings in the south, meetings in the east and meetings in the west. We've been in townships, towns, cities, regions, districts, counties—consultation is us.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So what you heard from communities, how much of that was actually actioned and put into your proposals?

Hon. Steve Clark: We have acted on a number of proposals we received, but let's—Chair, if I can wrap things up, let's look at the daunting task: We've got a 1.5-million-homes goal by 2031. It's big, it's aggressive, it's going to need everyone to co-operate and collaborate if we're going to make that. People can—and naysayers—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Minister. That concludes the questioning from MPP McMahon, and that, committee members, concludes our business for this morning. The committee is now recessed to 1 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1001 to 1301.

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 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development.

Today's remaining 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 half minutes for the independent member of the committee. Are there any questions?

FEDERATION OF RENTAL-HOUSING PROVIDERS OF ONTARIO

NO DEMOVICTIONS

NIAGARA COMMUNITY LEGAL CLINIC

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Seeing none, I will ask the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, Megan Kee and Niagara Community Legal Clinic if they'd like to come to the table. Thank you very much.

Just when you get assembled here, I will start with the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario. Please state your name—you've been here before—before you start and go ahead.

Mr. Tony Irwin: My name is Tony Irwin. I'm president and CEO of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario. Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members. Good afternoon. As you said, I've been privileged to be at this committee a few times before, and I thank you very much for the opportunity to return to speak again today.

I'm joined by my colleague Asquith Allen, who is FRPO's director of policy and regulatory affairs, who, I believe, is on Zoom.

FRPO has been a leading voice of the province's rental housing industry for over 30 years. We're 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 residential rental homes 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 on Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023. I'll just start by providing some introductory overview on the current state of Ontario's rental market.

The rental market has significantly tightened over the past few years. Earlier this year, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. released its annual rental market survey for 2022. In Ontario, CMHC reported a vacancy rate of 1.8% as of October 2022, a decrease from 3.5% in October 2021. More recently, Urbanation, which looks at the rental market within the GTA, reported a vacancy rate below the 2% threshold for the fifth consecutive quarter. This represents a significant decrease in vacancy levels from the peak of 6.4% during the first quarter of 2021.

A healthy vacancy rate is deemed to start at 3%, so we know where we sit, then, relative to that sort of threshold. As the rental market tightens up, rental housing providers have stepped up. A record 14,817 rental housing starts occurred in 2022. That's the highest we've seen in over 30 years.

I would like to acknowledge Minister Clark and Premier Ford for helping create the conditions that have led to these record rental starts in Ontario. However, our supply challenge continues. Even with this historic increase in starts, we are falling further and further behind as demand is rising even faster than we can build. A recent

study conducted by Urbanation concluded that Ontario is facing a 10-year rental supply gap of 236,000 units. This is in addition to the current accumulated deficit of 66,500, which means we need to build a net new 300,000 rental units on top of what's currently in the pipeline to balance the market over the next decade. That's precisely why FRPO continues to work with the government to create positive conditions to build and operate rental housing in the province of Ontario.

Now moving on to Bill 97: Our comments today will focus on schedule 7, amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, within the bill.

At the outset, I would like to commend the government for making the single largest investment in the Landlord and Tenant Board since its inception. The additional \$6.5 million to appoint 40 additional full-time adjudicators more than doubles the number of those resources at the LTB. Addressing the backlog at the LTB is not a landlord versus tenant issue—all sides agree that the time it takes to process a simple application at the LTB is failing to meet basic access to justice standards for everyone. I appreciate that the funding was not part of this legislation, but we wanted to go on the record to thank the government on this most important investment.

With respect to the measures in Bill 97, FRPO supports improving protections for those who live in rental housing as proposed in this package. The bill proposes to make many positive changes:

- requiring rental housing providers to use the Landlord and Tenant Board's plain-language form for repayment agreements to make it easier for residents to understand the terms;

- enabling the minister to make regulations related to municipal rental replacement bylaws across the province;

- enabling the minister to set out a specific deadline by which the rental housing provider or family member must move into the unit if a resident is asked to leave for personal use; and

- creating a framework related to when a resident is asked to vacate a property for renovations—this speaks to having a qualified person determine if vacant possession is required, giving two months after the renovation is complete for the resident to move back into the unit.

It also allows for residents to install air conditioners in their units based on certain conditions.

These are all steps that improve protections for residents who live in rental housing and these are all measures we support as an organization.

However, we have some suggestions around implementation challenges with one of the key provisions. The bill allows for a seasonal charge for use of a new air conditioning unit in situations where the landlord is paying for electricity. While we support a section providing for the installation and use of air conditioners, the administrative complexity around the proposed framework seems to be problematic both for residents and rental housing providers. For each unit, the resident has to provide information on anticipated usage and energy efficiency levels of their air conditioner. The rental housing provider can then

charge a seasonal fee equal to the increase in electricity cost based on that information. This would result in a unit-by-unit calculation of the fee based on information our residents may or may not be able to provide.

We are instead proposing a much simpler approach that will make it easier for both our residents and rental housing providers, providing flexibility to allow for a standard charge across the building. The rental housing provider can base it on historic data, such as the increase on the previous year's electricity bills for units with air conditioners during the previous summer. This would still hold true to the concept of recovering the cost but in a much less administratively burdensome fashion.

In summary, FRPO supports measures within section 7 of Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. We support increased protections for our residents that are outlined in the bill and will continue to work with the government to create a better rental housing climate for all. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to taking your questions.

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

We'll now move to Megan Kee who is online. Just state your name and you can go ahead.

Ms. Megan Kee: Thank you so much for providing me with the opportunity to speak today. My name is Megan Kee. I am not a housing expert, I'm not policy analyst, a lawyer or a politician. The perspective that I bring to this hearing today is that of a business owner, a social activist, a fundraiser, a board member, but, most importantly for today's hearing, as a renter.

I've lived in Toronto for almost 15 years. I completed my education here, I started my not-for-profit and my business here. I got married here, I have made lifelong friends here and I've even produced public art projects in places like Yonge-Dundas Square.

I've been lucky enough to be a part of the cultural fabric of this city for almost half of my life, but the reality that I am now facing, alongside other tenants in Toronto, is delaying important life plans like starting a family, inhibiting my ability to save for the future and may force me out of the city that I call home because I can no longer afford to live here.

I'm a resident of 55 Brownlow Avenue, which is a rent-controlled and affordable building that is set to be demolished and redeveloped by Menkes Developments and QuadReal. This development is set to displace over 200 people. The tenants who live in my building are living on ODSP and fixed incomes, they are seniors, they are young families, low-income individuals, and many of them cannot afford the rising rent rates in this city. My building is just one of more than 70 buildings being demovicted in the city of Toronto right now.

Since January 2023, in partnership with FMTA, multiple buildings facing demolitions, including my own, have come together to form No Demovictions. Together, we're doing our best to take a stand against the unethical displacement of tenants, the removal of the stock of affordable housing and the lack of protections for tenants being evicted. Today I'm not just representing myself, but

the almost 1,000 people and counting that No Demovictions represents.

1310

Which brings me to Bill 97. As you can imagine, I'm not here to oppose the additional funding for the LTB or to comment on air conditioning units. I'm here to talk about evictions, rental replacement and what this bill could be doing to help tenants.

So let's start with renovictions. One of the factors driving the surge of evictions, both renovictions and demovictions, is removal of universal rent control, a measure taken by this government in 2018. Since there is no rent control in units built or renovated after November 15, 2018, investors, developers and landlords have never had a greater incentive to turn over or demolish units to increase rents and maximize profits. This is one of the primary drivers of the affordability crisis in Toronto, in my opinion, which saw rent rates rise by 22.8% in the past year—the second-fastest annual rent growth in our city's history.

With that being said, it seems disingenuous for this government to put forth a bill that claims to protect tenants from renovictions when their actions on rent control contributed to this crisis in the first place. The measures in Bill 97 are the bare minimum that this government could be doing. Giving notice to tenants, letting them know when they can return, and requiring, potentially, a third party to approve a renovation is not enough. Without enforcements, no fines will be charged and landlords will continue to have the upper hand on tenants. In my opinion, if this government is interested in stopping unlawful evictions and protecting tenants, it would pass Bill 48, the Rent Control for All Tenants Act.

Let's move on to rental replacements. As you all know, we need more housing. As immigration increases and our population continues to grow, one thing we can all agree on is that we need to build more homes. But what kind of housing do we need? In the city of Toronto, where over 46% of the population are renters, what we need most is affordable, purpose-built rentals. However, since there are currently zero incentives for developers to build purpose-built rentals, the second-best we can do is to protect the existing stock of affordable housing. Rental replacement bylaws allow municipalities to do just that.

What Bill 97 does, in addition to Bill 23, Bill 109 and multiple other bills, is provide Steve Clark, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, with the power and authority to override municipal planning. Someone who is appointed by the Premier is able to strip municipalities of the right to decide what is best for their community and their constituents, something that is, in my opinion, undemocratic.

So before I finish this up, I want to share a very quick story about what community members at a building in Toronto are currently facing: 25 St. Mary Street, a building of over 500 people, is set to be demolished, making it one of the biggest demovictions in Toronto's history. In fact, the final vote on the application is taking place right now.

The compensation provided to tenants includes a rental pay gap of roughly \$2,000, which as many of you know means that if someone is paying \$1,500 for rent right now, the developer will pay the extra \$500 per month; however, the average market rent rate that they are using, that they are paying up to, is taken from CMHC data from three years ago. With the average rent rate rising 22.8% year over year, that means that tenants will have to take money out of their own pockets to pay up to 12,000 additional dollars per year until the new building has been built, which could take three to five years.

This is just one of the very many ways that rental replacement bylaws are already failing tenants. Almost every city councillor who spoke on the application on April 12 called it a net negative for affordable housing, and yet every single one of them voted to approve the application because they know that the province will approve it no matter what they do. To me, this is a broken system. It is unreasonable, in my opinion, for the Premier and the provincial government to centralize so much power in the hands of so few, especially when municipalities are democratically elected to represent the interests of their constituents.

I may not be a housing expert, a policy expert, a lawyer or a politician, but as a renter in this city I know that bills like this will continue to enrich developers, investors and landlords at the expense of working-class people. Without meaningful legislation, this will mean a rise in the number of disabled, elderly and low-income people experiencing homelessness, a rise in the number of people using food banks as more of their income is spent on rent, and a record number of people leaving this city and this province because they can no longer afford to live here.

Thank you for your time.

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

We'll now go to Niagara Community Legal Clinic. Thank you very much for being here today. Just state your name and proceed.

Ms. Rebecca Murray: Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Rebecca Murray. I'm a former articling student, current licence candidate with the Niagara Community Legal Clinic, hoping to get called to the bar soon. For my personal context, I am also a renter. I am accepting, in my thirties, that I will always be a renter. I will never own a home. I'll be lucky if I can maintain rent, ever.

With the increases of 22% a year in rent across the province, Welland, Port Colborne—small communities—their average rent for a one-bedroom is now \$2,000 a month. These communities do not have the jobs or the social services or the funding to support these rental prices. It's across the province. It's a deeply, deeply serious problem we're facing.

Our primary contribution today will be about the air conditioning amendments. As our summers—I'm sure we've all noticed—become hotter and less predictable, there has been an increase in fatalities during heat waves. Among the victims, the elderly and people with disabilities are disproportionately represented. These are also the groups that are most likely to be impacted by proposed

RTA section 36.1, respecting the installation and seasonal charges for air conditioning. This proposed section comes from the government listening to the needs of tenants who have been banned from using air conditioning in some of the hottest regions in our country. For example, last July in Niagara Falls, 25 of the 31 days of the month, the average temperature hit over 27 degrees with a humidity of 70%. That's extreme. That's most of the month, and July isn't even our hottest month most of the time.

This section: We are behind it. We believe it represents a step in the right direction to preventing heat deaths in the province. However, our concerns come with subsections (4) through (9), which then permit seasonal rent increases based on what the landlord has reasonably guessed that the likely electricity charge will be before any charges have actually been incurred. This functionally puts this new right behind a paywall. This is a paywall which the most vulnerable to the heat will also be the least likely to be able to afford.

In addition, we are gravely concerned about the extreme vagueness in these proposed subsections regarding the start date, stop date and amount of these seasonal charges. In my experience as tenant duty counsel, I believe the lack of certainty and clarity in this section will massively, massively further backlog our Landlord and Tenant Board and almost entirely wipe out any of the benefit the new funding is going to have, because now landlords and tenants have start dates, stop dates and amounts to fight over not once but twice a year at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

As such, the Niagara Community Legal Clinic submits the following additions for consideration:

(1) The ability for tenants to install their own plug power meter with their air conditioning unit to accurately measure the actual usage through the season and be granted a refund on any overpayments based on the landlord's pre-emptive estimate of costs;

(2) Robust subsidies for persons on any form of social assistance such that their access to air conditioning and not dying in their apartments because of the heat is not limited by their financial situation;

(3) Hard limits on the maximum allowable charge by any landlord for the estimate of electricity used. For example, there's a Montreal, Quebec, bylaw relating to their social housing provider which limits the monthly electricity charge for subsidized housing beneficiaries to \$5 a month.

Finally, in the event of disagreement, we believe the onus should be on the landlord to prove their estimated charge realistically reflected the energy costs for that specific tenant's air conditioner usage. Our primary concern is that landlords will institute automatic, massive, seasonal blanket charges to all tenants in a building automatically rather than tailor their charges to each specific unit.

When landlords are left to their own devices regarding fees with no ceiling set by legislators, the tenants lose. This is exemplified by the fact that rent has been increasing at a rate of 22% per year. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for your presentations, all three of you.

We'll now start with the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Harden, please.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you to the folks who came to share your insights with us this afternoon.

Mr. Irwin, I want to begin with you. I want to frame the question with a bit of a metaphor, because as I've heard the debate this afternoon about how we understand where the cost-of-living crisis for housing has gone through the roof, at least a couple of deputants have talked about the fact that the removal of rent control in 2018 has led to the situation we're in today. I think our friend from Niagara Falls—Niagara Falls?

Ms. Rebecca Murray: Welland, St. Catharines—the whole area.

Mr. Joel Harden: Pardon me—was talking about \$2,000 for a one-bedroom in that community. That's the same or worse in our community.

I want to bring up a particular example. I believe a member of yours—if they aren't, I apologize—Hazelview, formerly known as Timbercreek, recently gave notices to tenants in a community called Heron Gate of 6% to 20% in rent increases, because this particular property was built after 2018 and rent control provisions under this government don't apply to this community. This is the same place, Mr. Irwin, that 500 people were evicted from in a mass eviction after this landlord that, back then, was under a previous name known as Timbercreek, let the housing fall apart. The housing was dilapidated. I'm sure you know this story.

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What is in this bill to protect the tenants at Heron Gate from 6% to 20% rent increases? What's in this bill to make sure that real estate investment trusts like Hazelview don't get to throw 500 people out on the street and then build gentrified housing to hike the rent later?

Mr. Tony Irwin: Thank you for your question. First of all, with respect to the situation we're talking about, my understanding is Hazelview shifted those rent increases, shifted them downwards. Certainly they were very responsive and understanding that there are difficult economic conditions that many people are facing, and so, obviously, they did look at that and say, "We need to make some adjustments, we need to be responsive to what's going on." My understanding is they did do that, and I think that was a good thing they did.

Relative to the other parts of your question, the situation that we find ourselves in, I think, is much more to do—caused by a lack of supply than it is by anything else. We know the vast majority of residents in Ontario are rent-controlled. We all know that. That's fact. The majority of residents are rent-controlled. Yes, it's true that units built after 2018 are exempt, but that's not the vast majority. Some 90% of our rental stock was built before 1980, so I would submit that the vast majority of residents in Ontario are rent-controlled and are subject to the annual rent control guideline, which, of course, as we know, is capped at 2.5%.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Mr. Irwin, for that answer. I guess I struggle to understand how the cost of housing is going to become any more affordable if we allow situations like this to proceed. That's my question to you. I don't see anything in the bill before us that will make sure that residents of this community have reasonable rent increases. What I can say, for the record, is I think it's important to acknowledge where the negotiation in this matter came from. ACORN Ottawa, which is a tenants' organization, came to the assistance of these tenants, and they worked with city councillors in this area to negotiate these lower rents. But they're fluctuating. It's unit dependent. There's no uniform standard. Hazelview has incredibly powerful consultants and lobbyists working for them. This is a group of low-income residents trying to advocate for themselves as volunteers.

Would you say that it wouldn't be a good idea—this is the government that five years ago eliminated rent control on anything built after 2018. That fire was set. It has become a raging inferno. We have units costing \$2,000 or more. Don't you think it makes sense for an amendment to this bill to be made to ensure that that rent control gap is closed so that rent control applied in this particular situation? Wouldn't that be a positive step forward, instead of putting residents in the situation of having to negotiate on their own with powerful multi-property owners?

Mr. Tony Irwin: The rent control exception, what we know it has done is it has created more rental housing. It has supported and facilitated more rental housing to be built, and that is what we need.

Mr. Joel Harden: Is it affordable rental housing?

Mr. Tony Irwin: Well, new housing, by definition, is not going to be as affordable as older stock, clearly. I think that's pretty apparent. When you build something that's new, it is going to be different. It's not going to be the same rent as something that has existed for 40, 50 years—and that, of course, is another challenge that we need to talk about. New rental housing isn't always going to be the most affordable relative to something that has been standing for 30 or 40 years. That said, though, we need more newer housing to allow for people in other housing to move up to that housing to then free up that older housing for other tenants. It does work. It is, obviously, a system that has to work well together. We know that, for the last three decades, very little purpose-built rental was built in this province. We know that also. What do we do about that? How to get more rental housing built?

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a very good question you're asking.

How much time do I have left, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Two and a half minutes.

Mr. Joel Harden: What I would submit then, Mr. Irwin—and I'm going to move forward to our colleague who presented from the Welland area: How do we make sure that we have a regulatory regime, as you say, where legislators play a role in making sure there's some predictability? Because for the residents of Heron Gate, 7% to

20% depending upon what you can negotiate is a chaotic situation. So what's a better situation?

Ms. Rebecca Murray: I guess it would be listening to people who are voting, and not corporations who are supporting campaigns, would be a massive aspect of this. Repeatedly, you end up with situations like this where there's a little bit that's good. Where it's like, cool, your landlord can't ban you from an air conditioning, but we're also not going to let it eat into the profits of massive corporate real estate investments funds. We're going to leave you on your own to negotiate that with them. Appreciating, I think, when we're addressing residential tenancy legislation, the extreme imbalance of negotiating power is a primary aspect that needs to be considered when moving forward on how to address the affordability crisis.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you. Is there 30 seconds left?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's a minute and 15.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to give Ms. Kee the opportunity to elaborate based upon the examples you talked about. What would be a better regulatory regime than the Wild West for anything built after 2018 for rental housing?

Ms. Megan Kee: I think, at the moment, there's a lot of power in the hands of people who have money and wealth and resources, and that tends to be developers, investors and landlords. It is not working for tenants.

Like I said, I'm not a legislator; I'm not a politician. I don't know that I can speak specifically to the types of regulations or laws that need to be put in place to stop this from happening. But I would say that this bill, in addition to previous housing bills under this provincial government, are largely skewed towards providing landlords, developers and investors with the opportunity to profit off our housing when I believe that housing is a human right. It is something that should be protected, and the financialization of housing is making it very difficult for people to live in this province.

I don't know if I have anything to add to that, but thank you.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the folks who came to present this afternoon again.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move to MPP McMahon, if you would like, for four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you to all the speakers for coming in and sharing. Sorry I was late; I was at a flag-raising.

It's really important that you come in and share your ideas and your stories. My first question is for Megan. I just really especially appreciate you coming in. It's very important for us to hear from renters. You mentioned a little bit about where you live and I know that your MPP has been very strong on sharing that story, but I'm wondering if you can tell us a bit more about—is it 25 St. Mary Street? If you can just enlighten us with what's going on there in full detail?

Ms. Megan Kee: Sure; 25 St. Mary Street is a building in downtown Toronto, in University–Rosedale. They have 259 units in their building. There are 500 people that are

represented by that, and they are much further along in the demolition process than my building is. They have had a couple of their hearings. The final one today is being voted on at city council and, essentially, they are fighting to keep the building if they can. But they have unfortunately had losses at every turn with city council. They have tried to reach out to their city councillor and have failed to do so. They have reached out to MPPs; they've tried to reach out to as many people as possible, because one of the realities with this building is that, because it is rent-controlled and affordable, the people who live there are people who are on fixed incomes, they are low-income, and a lot of them have been in that community for up to 50 years. They are not only connected to doctors, but to their work, to transit, to amenities, and a lot of them are low-income, they're young families, they're students, they're people who cannot afford to pay the rent rates that are currently in Toronto.

Their situation, unfortunately, is that they are likely going to lose their building. And they're not losing their building because the building is falling apart or because it is in disrepair; they're losing their building because Tenblock decided to purchase their building and wants to build a condo with market units on their property. So they're going to displace 500 people and the rental replacement bylaws, at present, mean that the rental pay gap that they are being paid is not enough, so they will be paying out of pocket. For people on a fixed income, that's an extremely difficult situation.

Also, unfortunately, one of the things that is so heart-breaking is that nobody is standing up for them. This is not just a building—and I think that's one of the important things that No Demovictions is trying to showcase, that this is a systemic problem that is happening across Ontario and that it is profitable to buy up these properties where there are low-income people who do not have the capacity to fight back and stand up for themselves. They don't have lobbyists. They don't have resources. They may not have money. And so these properties are being bought up and condos are being built there because it is more profitable for developers to do that. I don't blame developers. The entire goal of a development company is to make money.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final 60 seconds.

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Ms. Megan Kee: I would say that making money is the primary goal—profit—and then the second is to provide housing. That housing that they are providing is market units, they are not affordable units. There are 50 additional affordable units being put into that building, but, in my opinion, that's just not enough.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, how lucky are they to have you advocating for them today. I really appreciate you sharing your story. Thank you.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the presenters: Tony, Megan, Rebecca, thank you for your presentations.

I'll ask Tony first. Tony, as you've probably seen, the latest data shows that Ontario has seen an 11% increase in housing starts over the last year, up nearly 1,200 over the same time last year. Also, the rental housing starts doubled so far—compared to last year's data, the rental housing also doubled. Right now, if you go across Toronto, you will see there are more cranes in the sky than in New York or Washington or anywhere.

My question to you, Tony, is: What are the main factors that led to the record number of housing starts in Ontario?

Mr. Tony Irwin: Thank you for your question. The one thing that our members say to us time and time again is the need to have certainty in their environment, right? We know that we live in a world that's constantly changing, but as relates to government and government regulations it's important that there be certainty—that they understand the environment that they're working in and then they can adapt and make plans based on that.

Certainly, there is no question, as I said earlier, the post-2018 rent-control exemption has absolutely been critical in getting new purpose-built rental built. We know over the last three decades very little of that housing type was built in Ontario and in Toronto specifically, and that obviously needs to change. The numbers we've seen over the last two years have both been record numbers. They're still a long way from where they need to be if we're going to get to the 1.5 million homes that we need to build over the next eight years or so in this province, but it is a huge step in the right direction. That certainly is one thing.

Other measures the government has put into place—whether it be development charge deferrals, development charge discounts for purpose-built rental—it really is about saying as a government and as a society we need more purpose-built rentals. The economics are different than condominiums. They need different treatment in certain ways to incentivize that kind of building, and we are seeing positive results.

We need to keep moving forward and we need to obviously say yes more than we say no. It doesn't mean stifling community involvement or people being able to have input into what goes on, but the numbers speak for themselves. If we want to bring in more immigration, we want to bring in more foreign students, we want to be a world-class city, we have to have the housing necessary for people, and that's what we're starting to see. We have to keep moving forward.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Awesome. Thank you, Tony.

Madam Chair, I will share my time with MPP McGregor.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McGregor, please go ahead.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I just want to thank all the guests for being here with us today. The housing supply crisis and the affordability crisis is, speaking as a millennial, probably the biggest generational—certainly economic, but maybe just period—issue that we're facing. Speaking on behalf of many folks in my generation—MPPs get paid pretty well, but it's a grind out there when

it comes to affordability even still. I wonder myself sometimes about—right now with the stat being that it takes 20 years to save up a down payment, and that's at today's prices, where are we going to be later?

Really, looking at the macro, I think one of the things that we should be, and our generation needs to be concerned about, is, quite frankly, the lack of supply to meet the demand. You look at G7 countries around the world, Canada has the lowest number of housing units per capita of any G7 country, which is frustrating when you see that we're also the biggest G7 country and we've got all the materials to build houses and we have relatively low population. It doesn't make a ton of sense.

I'll do an anecdote and I'll finish with a question. In my own experience, I recently went through renting a new property. Moving in with a partner, we needed more space and we rented a house. What we found is when the listing goes up, you've got to email right away or you're not going to get it. When the listing goes up, you've to email right away or you're not going to get it. If you don't email the day that the listing goes up, if you don't jump in right away with a good application ready to go, that landlord is going to miss on you because they've got eight or nine other people who want that same—we see that in the housing market for purchasing as well. I look at that, and I wonder—if we don't address that economic reality, that supply-demand gap, there's not a government program in the world that's going to be able to regulate that market. We need to get more supply, especially when you consider the population we have today but the population that's going to be growing with the amounts of immigration, which we welcome and that make our community better, but we need to build for them.

Mr. Irwin, one of the changes that we're making here is around major transit station areas, unlocking density, particularly around transit—so not only is there lots of availability of places for people to live, but they're also going to be around places for transit so people can get to where they've got to go. Can you talk about, in as much specificity as you can, how that is going to impact the industry's ability to deliver purpose-built rental units?

Mr. Tony Irwin: It will have a huge impact. Density intensification, I know, is a difficult subject. It's one that has a lot of strong emotions attached to it, but we need to build more density. Again, if we're going to achieve the targets that have been set out by the Premier, and I think agreed to by many people, we need to build more density. So where does it make sense to do that? Well, it makes sense to do that along major transit corridors. We've seen that in previous legislation, being able to build four storeys as of right on a main transit corridor, looking at major transit station areas, being able to intensify those places—those are areas that make sense.

Looking in employment lands, sure, you have to look at those sites probably individually, but I think there are some for which employment that they were previously used for is not ever going to return, strip malls that are not really doing much anymore. There are a lot of places where it makes sense to build more density, and certainly

around transit areas where people are getting on transit, going to work, going to do things, it makes sense to me that those areas be unlocked and that there be as of right or there, certainly, be a much faster approval process.

I remember sitting here a few years ago, talking with one of your colleagues about—he asked me about a 10-year approval process, and that might not happen every day, but six, seven years is not uncommon. So moving away from that, prioritizing areas where it makes sense to build and getting on with building in areas you're talking about makes imminent sense and would make a huge difference towards getting us where we need to go.

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

Mr. Graham McGregor: Twenty-five seconds? Oh.

For our legal clinic friend: Something I think we might be able to agree on, that's a good idea in the bill—we're actually implementing the largest fines that the Landlord and Tenant Board can apply, anywhere in Canada, bigger than Alberta, bigger than BC. Is that a good thing, or are we missing the mark?

Ms. Rebecca Murray: Fines would be excellent if they were enforced and actually handed out. I believe one of my colleagues from ACTO, who is going to be touching on this later—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's good, because we're out of time. Thank you very much.

To the second round, so to MPP Bell, please, if you want to begin seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to Tony Irwin, Rebecca Murray and Megan Kee for coming in. I have questions for all of you.

Just to be clear, we're very concerned about this government's plan to address the housing crisis, because housing has never been more expensive to rent or buy, and our homelessness crisis is at levels we've never seen before. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have had five years to fix our housing affordability crisis, and we're not there. Let's just put it out there.

My first question is to Megan. Megan, thank you for explaining what's happening at 55 Brownlow Avenue and 25 St. Mary Street. You talked a little bit about the rental replacement bylaws at the city level. How do you think they should be strengthened? What are you proposing?

Ms. Megan Kee: Thank you for the question. One of the things that I would like to see is—first and foremost, beyond rental replacement, just very quickly, is that I think that if a business development company or an investor wants to destroy a building, we need to showcase that that building is no longer viable and that it needs to be demolished, otherwise the environmental impact of that is unnecessary. We do not need to be tearing down buildings that are structurally sound and house vulnerable people.

The rental replacement laws that I think could be strengthened are, first and foremost, that the rental pay gap needs to be evaluated, given the current housing crisis, on a six-month basis to ensure that the rental top-up isn't making tenants pay from their pocket, because that is extremely important.

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I think another thing that we need is to ensure that, when an apartment is being demolished, people are returning to a similar unit, and that it's not vague, that it has the same square footage, because if you have a two-bedroom that you're returning to that is half the size, there are a lot of people who are seniors or young families who actually need that space, especially if they have growing young families. So I think there are a lot of specific measures that need to be put in place to ensure that people are returning to units that are similar in many different ways, and that when they are away for the period of construction, they are being properly compensated.

I also think it's really important, when those affordable units are replaced in the new building, that they are replaced permanently, because 10 years is still removing the stock of affordable housing in the long term. As somebody mentioned, 90% of the purpose-built rentals in this country were built over 40 years ago. So since we're not building it, we need to be protecting it.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. We are looking at introducing amendments to Bill 97 to address many of the issues that you're raising, and you've given me some additional tools and ideas for thought.

My next question is to Rebecca. Rebecca, you spoke a little bit about the issue with a lack of enforcement when it comes to illegal evictions. If a tenant is illegally evicted, everything I have heard indicates that the tenant never gets their home back and the landlord is almost never fined. Can you speak to what you see at your legal clinic? What are tenants facing, and what do you think needs to be changed in this bill to help them?

Ms. Rebecca Murray: Thank you. What we're facing—it's horrific. It's actually horrific. We have to have constant team meetings and group meetings about how to process our own trauma when we're going into the Landlord and Tenant Board, which has become a meat grinder. It's vulnerable people, almost exclusively without representation, just being kicked out. And first, that's if they can even get into our legal clinic, which is now so overwhelmed from calls from people who are getting N12s and N13s specifically. They have no idea what to do, so they'll be like, "Well, I already left. What do I do?" And then we have to start trying to play catch-up. Then, if you can get them to fill out the T5 form and get it submitted, you have to wait a year, and you have to then get them or have legal staff stalking the rental property to make sure that it did go to someone who wasn't the "own use" and that it isn't being renovated, because most often it's not. But then that gets put on us and the tenant to enforce it, and it's just really awful.

I believe one of the statistics was, in the last 10 years, there's only been maybe 11 fines that have been actually at the maximum offered at the Landlord and Tenant Board, and now there's an open secret in many landlord chat groups and tenant chat groups and our own listservs that they haven't been enforced since the pandemic started. It used to be that at least the landlord couldn't reapply to evict someone if they had outstanding fines. Now, as far

as we're aware, they're not tracked. So they get the fines, they ignore the fine and they continue on. And even then, it's still largely a cost of business.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes. Thank you very much for sharing that. It's extremely concerning. I don't believe Bill 97 is going to address the illegal eviction crisis that we have in Ontario, because there's no serious look at how we can enforce these laws.

My next question is to Tony Irwin. Thank you so much for coming in. My question is about consultation. Can you describe the consultation, if any, that has taken place between you and your organization and ministry staff in advance of Bill 97 being introduced?

Mr. Tony Irwin: Well, I think like most industry associations, we have ongoing conversations with government. I would say that a lot of our consultation works probably like other organizations. When bills come out, there are postings—ERO postings, regulatory registry postings. We respond to those. We have informal conversations with government on a regular basis about different matters. But certainly when it comes to a lot of legislation, we respond just like everyone else does to those postings; we're invited to come—or I should say, we register to come and speak at committee. That's how the process works for us.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that. Can you explain your specific position or what you are recommending should change with municipal rental replacement bylaws? What have you been advocating to the government on that?

Mr. Tony Irwin: So for rental replacement, I would say, again, our position is that we support there being clear rules, a framework that can be understood and can be well communicated to both sides.

We know, again, that our stock is aging. I'm not an engineer or an architect or a building official, but I know that buildings are getting older, and I know that at some point, they are going to have to come down. So having a system that is uniform, that can be generally applied across the province, I think it's important that we have that, because this is only going to continue to be an issue. The buildings aren't going to just all of a sudden not be getting older; they're going to keep getting older. So, what is a system that is fair and balanced, relative to compensation that needs to be provided, notice that needs to be provided? We talked about that there needs to be—obviously, the units that are taken down must be replaced. We know that's important—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, but we're out of time. You can pick up later.

Mr. Tony Irwin: Sorry.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's fine. No problem.

MPP McMahan, for the independent, for four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahan: Thank you very much. My first few questions are for the Niagara Community Legal Clinic, Rebecca Murray. You were listing your suggestions, and I actually—sorry; I missed number

2, but they were amazing. If you could just read me number 2 again.

Ms. Rebecca Murray: Yes. Our second suggestion is that, worst case scenario, there are at least robust subsidies in place for people who are on social assistance. They skew towards those most represented in heat deaths, and it makes sense, at the very least, if we can't help everyone, to help and make sure that they aren't being over-represented in those statistics, through robust additional subsidies in their social assistance programs.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Thanks. And then you were talking about the fines and you were kind of cut off in your answer about enforcement, whether actually they're enforced, whether they're actually handed out. What do you think of a proper robust tracking system? Did you ever put your mind on that, and what would that look like, in your opinion?

Ms. Rebecca Murray: Ideally, we think that it should be, if a landlord has applied for own use or renovation or demolition or whatever, that they actually have to register that somewhere, with maybe the Landlord and Tenant Board or a different regulatory body. And that body can track and make sure that then when it's done, it is done and the proper notices get sent out to the proper tenants. That way, there's a central way to track who's being evicted, for what, and did they get the proper notice to move back in, were they given the opportunity to even move back in.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. And then, I think, as with most bills of this government, there are some good parts to it—

Interjections: Yay!

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Don't take that compliment completely to your heads. There are also some troubling things.

The A/Cs: I think that's fantastic. We're in a climate emergency, and extreme heat is upon us and going to worsen. We are going to unfortunately see some deaths if we don't get doing things proactively immediately. So I think that this component of the bill is fantastic in that way. But I wonder—it makes me nervous to put this on the back of the renters. What do you think about the landlords installing the air conditioning, since they're in their property?

Ms. Rebecca Murray: Ideally—their profit margins are at record highs. They're charging \$1,700, \$2,000 a month for a unit, when air conditioning, especially a smaller, newer air conditioning unit, costs, what, \$50, \$25 a month to run? That's not going to bankrupt a corporation. That's not even going to bankrupt a small landlord; it will force seniors and disabled persons to choose between food and air conditioning, though—\$25 is extreme when your income is maxed out at \$1,500 a month, and that's your rent.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Right, and there could be bulk purchasing power or something with landlords. Okay—

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh, okay.

Then quickly over to—because I haven't asked you, Tony and Asquith. Just one final thought as we consider Bill 97—maybe Asquith, if he wants.

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Mr. Asquith Allen: Sure. Thank you for the opportunity. I would just get up on what Tony mentioned in his opening remarks, that it might be better to institute some sort of a standard charge for a building, as opposed to a unit-by-unit cost, which at least on the side of the provider can get more onerous, but we are encouraged and we do support the section in principle to provide air conditioning.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okey-doke. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Now over to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Smith, please.

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Chair, I want to thank everyone for being here, whether it's virtual or at the table. We always like to see our contributors here with us at Queen's Park.

I'm not a mathematician—I have to start with that fact—but I do understand the simple idea that creating more builds will create more homes and more locations for people to live in, and that gives a lot of choice and that also hopefully will decrease rents over time. Simply, when you flood the market with more items, it brings the cost of things down. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about toilet paper or a tenancy.

One of the things that we're investing in, in talking about the tenancies, is funding and hiring more adjudicators with more staff, doubling the amount of adjudicators in the Landlord and Tenant Board and creating something that will allow us to deal with the backlog that we're facing right now—and greater legal protections. Right now, it's fines for an individual of \$100,000—these are for bad actors—and \$500,000 for corporations. This is historic, when you consider other provinces. It's actually astounding.

My question is to Tony: Do you think the measures proposed in this bill, given what we've just talked about, will help address the bad actors in the rental housing market? And how will it affect the rental market?

Mr. Tony Irwin: Absolutely. First of all, in terms of fines and penalties, I have gone on the record many times before supporting that. If you're not playing by the rules, there should be penalties for that. I can't speak to how often they're handed out—I don't have data on that—but certainly I'm very supportive of fines being increased and rules being brought in that further enhance resident protections.

We've always said that there need to be strong protections for residents and there also needs to be an operating climate that allows for rental housing providers to provide housing. I think it's important to point out that still the largest percentage of rental housing providers are small landlords. Yes, there are REITs and there are large corporations and medium-size corporations that provide rental housing, but the largest segment still are small—I guess we would call them mom-and-pop—landlords, who save money for a down payment to buy property, they're

renting it out and it's their retirement plan. That's what they're trying to do. They're just trying to provide housing and build some equity in a property. But the challenges on them are real. Issues around skyrocketing costs to operate those properties are real.

But back to your question, MPP Smith, around what's in this bill, will it protect residents and are these important measures? They absolutely are. Funding the Landlord and Tenant Board and providing this historic funding to get backlogs cleared and provide fair access to justice for all: This is something that I think everyone in the system can agree on was overdue and was needed, and we're certainly very encouraged by that.

I do think that the other measures in the bill that do strengthen tenant protections are important, will have an impact and will ultimately lead to a healthier and more balanced rental housing system and that will benefit everyone.

Ms. Laura Smith: Do you think that that will streamline construction as well as protecting tenants? Do you think this will help us with the ultimate goal of more builds?

Mr. Tony Irwin: One thing I would say is, I make the connection for people between a healthy operating environment—the funding to the Landlord and Tenant Board, for example—and housing. What I mean by that is, people looking to get in the business, people looking to stay in the business want to know that they have a level playing field that works for them. That's absolutely important.

Ms. Laura Smith: Because as you said, a lot of the landlords are ma-and-pa, and you want to make it, let's say, a place where people want to get into the market and not shy away from it.

Mr. Tony Irwin: Last night, I was in London, speaking to the London Property Management Association AGM. These are ordinary Ontarians, and they're saying that nine, 12 months to get through a process puts huge financial, emotional, psychological strain—and it does for both sides; I would readily acknowledge that. So having a system where everyone knows that they can get through and they can have their matter adjudicated on a more timely basis gives everyone a better sense of confidence. Certainly, in terms of getting more housing and having people stay in this industry, definitely it's very important, and I think it's fundamentally fair for everyone.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you. Time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Two and a half minutes.

Ms. Laura Smith: I will pass the rest of my time to Mr. Rae.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to all the presenters for being here today. I appreciated your deputations to the committee. As the minister mentioned this morning, consultation is us, so we're really appreciative of all your feedback, as well.

My question is to Tony. I understand that your organization represents 2,200 members in Ontario, roughly,

350,000 tenants overall—rough estimates. As you know very well and as other members are aware, our government committed to tabling every year of a four-year mandate a new housing supply action bill to continue to build on past successes, to continue to update that legislation as we hear from municipalities and other stakeholders. So I was just wondering, in the brief time I have left, if you could elaborate on what your organization would like to see, potentially, in future housing bills as we move forward.

Mr. Tony Irwin: We have the Housing Affordability Task Force report that came out some time ago and had 55 recommendations; some of those have moved forward in bills, whether it be Bill 23 or Bill 97—others still need to be implemented, I think. For us, I think it's really about continuing to advocate for policies that will further incentivize the building of more purpose-built rental units.

As I said earlier, starts in the last two years have both been higher than the year before; they've both been records. We still have a long way to go.

So whether it's talking about, as MPP McGregor was asking me earlier, unlocking sites around transit, getting more as-of-right zoning, or updating zoning to be more reflective of what we need for rental housing, there are a whole series of initiatives, really, around speeding up the process—whether it be having a rental housing facilitator that could really move projects along.

We really have to have—I think it is coming up with and utilizing and implementing all of those recommendations to be able to get more housing built, and, from my point of view, of course, more purpose-built rental housing.

So there's still a lot to do. We've made a lot of progress, but there's a lot more that needs to be done to speed up approvals to be able to get shovels in the ground, to get more rental housing built.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We're out of time for this round.

I'd like to thank the presenters for appearing, and I'd ask you to vacate the table so the next group can come. Thank you very much, everyone.

ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR
TENANTS ONTARIO

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF
AGRICULTURE

BUILDING INDUSTRY AND LAND
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Our next group of presenters I'll ask to make their way to the table, those who aren't on-screen—Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Building Industry and Land Development Association. We'll just give a minute for people to change places, and then we will begin, when we're settled up, with the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. I believe Dania is on a virtual screen for us.

When you're ready, please state your name and proceed.

Ms. Dania Majid: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Dania Majid. I'm here representing the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. We are a community legal clinic with a province-wide mandate dedicated to addressing systemic housing issues. We also coordinate the Tenant Duty Counsel Program, which provides tenants with legal advice before their hearings at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

As with Bill 184, Bill 97 fails to address the root causes of bad-faith evictions, which is vacancy decontrol. To better understand why the proposed amendments on their own will not prevent renoventions, we first need to understand the housing context in cities across Ontario.

There are 1.7 million renter households in Ontario, which is 31% of Ontario households—and growing. Renters are living on the margins. Approximately 40% of rental households are spending more than 30% of their income on shelter costs and 25% of them are in core housing need. Once their rent is paid, many renters report not having enough income left for basic needs, including food.

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Rents in Ontario's cities are some of the highest in the country. The average asking rent in Ontario has gone up by more than 17% in one year, to more than \$2,400, but it is even higher in cities including Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, North York and Etobicoke, which can fetch rents as high as \$2,800 a month. Renters' incomes have not kept up with rent increases, making them poorer with each rent hike.

All-time-low vacancy rates, skyrocketing rents and growing demand for housing has turned residential properties into highly coveted investments for landlords, speculators and developers. In fact, investors, both big and small, make up the largest segment of buyers of residential real estate in the province at 25% of buyers. Many properties they purchase have long-time renters in them, including many seniors, who are paying affordable rents. To make a profit on their investment from these lower-rent units, investors resort to practices like renoventing or demovicting the current renter out of the unit and replacing them with a new renter who is charged double or more in new rents thanks to the vacancy decontrol loophole. The evicted renter, unable to afford current market rent, is displaced from their community.

The amendments proposed in Bill 97, like its predecessor, Bill 184, will do nothing or do very little to protect tenants from bad-faith evictions as long as rent control loopholes provide investors with a windfall that far exceeds any disincentives proposed in this bill. Our feedback on the bill's provisions are presented in greater detail in our forthcoming written submissions to the committee. I will highlight a few concerns now.

Regarding the tenant's right of first refusal, we appreciate the clarity that the bill attempts to bring, but it doesn't go far enough in preventing abuse. In reality, landlords have resorted to underhanded tactics to avoid the

former renter moving back into the newly renovated unit at their pre-existing rent. This includes putting new occupants into the unit. Landlords rely on the unprecedented delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board, which now average about two years to schedule a tenant application, in order to act with impunity. They also know that the board rarely orders reinstatements of unlawfully evicted renters into occupied units, and that any financial penalty incurred is very small in relation to the financial gains from the much higher rent being charged.

ACTO recommends that this government amend section 31 of the RTA to clearly state that the Landlord and Tenant Board has the authority to reinstate an unlawfully evicted tenant back into an occupied unit. This will help deter landlords from denying renters' rights of first refusal.

Increased administrative fines were also introduced in Bill 184 and it did not work to dissuade bad-faith evictions. Increasing them again in Bill 97 will likely produce the same result. A quick search on CanLII of the T5 applications for bad-faith evictions from July 2020, when Bill 184 was enacted, to present time reveals 74 T5 applications in the decision database. Only 14 of these applications were applications where an administrative fine was a remedy that was requested by the displaced renter. Of the applications that were decided in the renters' favour, the board declined to issue administrative fines in half those cases, and in the other half, where the board did issue a fine, the fines only ranged from \$500 to \$3,000. These are not a deterrent for a landlord; it's just the cost of doing business. At the end of the day, the fines are meaningless if the board never fully utilizes them.

Renters should not carry the burden of collecting evidence and pursuing hearings at the board for administrative fines that do not even benefit them. We would much rather see a robust rental housing enforcement unit with significantly increased resources and a mandate to proactively prevent renoventions and demovictions by issuing fines and referring matters to prosecution.

Lastly, I would like to address the amendments to section 99.1(7) of the Municipal Act set out in schedule 5. We strongly disagree with the province interfering in municipalities' ability to pass rental replacement bylaws. There is a dire shortage of existing affordable housing, and because of vacancy decontrol, we are losing these properties at an alarming rate as they are replaced with luxury rentals and condos. Toronto alone is looking at 70 purpose-built rental buildings being demolished, affecting 10,000 tenants. Mississauga also relies on rental replacement bylaws to stem the loss of rental units to development.

Municipalities need the power to put in place local protections for renters displaced because their home is being torn down and to protect existing rental stock in these communities. There is no evidence to suggest rental replacement policies prevent housing renewal or that a one-size-fits-all approach meets the complex needs in both urban centres and rural communities.

In conclusion, we can't afford to wait any longer to close these rent control loopholes. The myth that rent control impacts the creation of new housing has been debunked by numerous studies on the ground over the last—

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

We'll now move over to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Peggy, please state your name and proceed.

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: Peggy Brekveld, president of Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Spring is here in rural Ontario. You can see the green rows, you can hear the tractors, and you can even smell what my husband calls the sweet smell of success. If you are in farmer language, you know what I'm talking about. It's beautiful. I hope that you think of Ontario's farmers and Ontario farmland when you taste this year's crop.

OFA represents over 38,000 farmers in our province, a \$47-billion industry, 750,000 jobs and over 200 different foods, fibre, fuel and even flowers and nursery products. Our vision is farms and food forever. It is with this lens that we look at bills and regulations: farms and food forever.

OFA considers the bigger picture. What will make farming successful for generations? What will be good for the agricultural system as a whole? What changes would ensure that we can keep on farming, growing and being the amazing, innovative industry that Ontario really loves to showcase?

Today, I bring comments on Bill 97, the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, as well as some of the changes that Bill 97 will enable through the PPS 2023. I will comment on the portions that have long-term consequences for farming in Ontario only.

As context, there's only one landscape in this province, and everything has to fit. Priorities for life include food, water and shelter. More recently, there has been a lot of conversation about housing or shelter, including in this bill. But all three have an impact. If you ate today, a farmer grew it; it's just a question of where.

In Ontario, only 5% of our land base is arable or farmable. Much of it exists next door to urban areas. As well, between the last two censuses, we saw a decrease of 319 acres per day of farmland. That looks like 797 hockey rinks—or 1.2 million bottles of wine, if that's how you like to finish your day. The vast majority of farming is land-based.

In the last six months, government has released the Grow Ontario Strategy, hosted the Grow Ontario summit, announced dollars for agricultural research and support for student veterinarians, and even a soil strategy. Each one demonstrates an interest in the farming community and long-term agricultural success. OFA supports these announcements, knowing that they can help farmers and the farming community, which makes the current bill's impact on farming so contrary to the messages that government sends us.

Bill 97 and the changes it enables in the proposed provincial planning statement will have generational impacts on farming. The biggest concern for the farming community is allowing additional residential lot severances to every farm property in the province. This will have lasting implications for generations of farmers. It has the potential to almost neuter the livestock sector in much of Ontario and affect grains and horticulture across the province—and I actually don't know if you can almost neuter something, but it will cause huge problems.

It will take acres out of production. Wayne Caldwell suggests, if they are simply one-acre lots, it will be 145,000 acres or lots. It will add to the pressures on the road as farm equipment moves around and as more people complain about normal farm practices such as smell, light, noise and dust.

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But most importantly, minimum distance separation calculations were created after Walkerton to protect both farmers and homeowners from risks to our water supply. They were created using the best math to allow both for the maximum farming to occur with normal farm practices, while also protecting the homeowners' water supply, which is often wells. It means that livestock housing, nutrient-spreading and manure storage must be located a certain distance from homes and wells. Some farms, if those things go through, will never be able to grow again and will be forever affected by the additional houses.

This was the way in the early 2000s. The practice was halted on most agricultural land because of the challenges to the agricultural system and the barriers to farming easily in many places. We acknowledge that individual farmers could profit from the sale of severed lots—you may have heard from several of them—but the agricultural system will suffer, and there will be a burden on the province and municipalities if this happens.

Some additional concerns with Bill 97: Section 6 gives additional powers to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to make minister's zoning orders to govern land uses and the uses that could be exempt from complying with provincial policies and official plans. It means that some of the protections afforded to agriculture in the current PPS 2020 will no longer apply, such as protection or consideration of specialty crop areas and class 1, 2 and 3 soils. MZOs absolutely have a place—I don't deny that—but they were never meant for aggressive use. Significant acres have been lost to MZOs.

Settlement areas will also be allowed to expand without demonstrating a need for expansion. OFA believes that there are ways to build communities in and up, reviewing and renewing current land uses. Building it up means better use of municipal infrastructure and better supports for public transit. It also protects farmland and protects food production.

Finally, the removal of the provincial agricultural systems mapping will create a piecemeal vision of farmland. Agricultural systems are large, continuous swathes of farmland and farming infrastructure that make it easier

to farm, without the pressures of road congestion and excessive housing. Municipalities have limited resources, and, realistically, one community might map, because it will change from “you shall” to “you should”—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 30 seconds remaining.

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: Thank you. Some will have a chance to do that; some will not. The thing is, soil quality does not end at a municipal boundary. Farmland continues to be a limited and precious resource for Ontario. OFA urges the government to view all land use planning with a long-term vision, and it sounds like farms and food forever.

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

Now over to David Wilkes of the Building Industry and Land Development Association.

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Thank you very much and good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee. It’s great to be back here. As indicated, my name is Dave Wilkes, and I’m the president and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association of the GTA. We thank you for the opportunity to speak to the proposed Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, which takes significant steps to address the housing supply crisis, particularly here in the GTA.

Through the lens of new homebuyers, BILD strongly supports the proposed Bill 97. I would like to focus my remarks today on the proposed amendments within the bill to the Planning Act regarding the refund provisions of Bill 109, the More Homes for Everyone Act, which received royal assent in April of last year. The amendments contained in this bill, if passed, would delay the requirement for municipalities to refund zoning bylaw and site plan application fees so that they only apply to applications on or after July 1 of this year, as opposed to the original date of January 1. Bill 97 also proposes amendments to allow the creation of minister’s regulation-making authority to be able to exempt municipalities from the fee refund provisions in the future if needed.

BILD is supportive of these amendments. However, our recommendation to the committee today is to go even further, because of the unintended consequences and actions of many municipalities in the GTA in reaction to the fee refund requirement of Bill 109.

Before I present our recommendation, by way of background, in an effort to deliver more housing faster, Bill 109 now allows for some or all of the application fees to be refunded for a rezoning application, a combined official planned amendment and rezoning application, or a site plan application.

I’ve included a chart in the written remarks that I shared with the Clerk, for reference, of the provisions of Bill 109.

This was an initiative that BILD applauded at the time, as it intended to incent municipalities to meet provincial approval timelines and accelerate housing supply for the consumer while reducing costs for new home buyers. We continue to support that direction; however, rather than working to meet these deadlines, we are disappointed that

we’re seeing increasing instances of municipalities seeking to circumvent these requirements, quite often in a manner which contravenes the Planning Act, and it absolutely disregards the intent of the provincial legislation to accelerate housing supply.

Allow me to explain. In response to Bill 109, we have seen many municipalities preparing official plan policies and bylaws that impose onerous requirements outside the parameters of the Planning Act. These OP policies and bylaws are front-ending municipal application review in order to avoid triggering the Bill 109 timelines, which is, of course, contrary to its purpose.

New pre-application requirements and proposals by municipalities include some of the following:

- an initial round of substantive technical review application;
- the requirement to submit revised application materials;
- third-party consultations and clearances;
- public meetings and community consultations; and
- the requirement to enter into agreements.

All of these are traditionally done inside the approval time frame, and a municipality is now essentially contravening the Planning Act by delaying a lawful submission. These actions are, in my opinion, at best, obstructionist, and certainly run counter to the goal of delivering more housing.

We come today with a recommendation, as I indicated: that the province identify and institute a project-specific mechanism that will temporarily waive the Bill 109 refund regime, but this comes with some strict criteria. There must be a non-negotiable condition of agreement by both the municipality and the applicant, and this can only apply in the following circumstances:

- where it is acknowledged that this agreement is on a path between the municipality and the applicant in the spirit of co-operation and the interest of accelerating housing supply;
- the applicant and the municipality would be required to clearly define the scope of the work that must be undertaken within this pause period; and
- a maximum duration must be identified for this pause to take place.

To acknowledge that all parties involved are exercising their best efforts to meet time frames—and we really see this mechanism as a stopgap procedure—it would only be available for applicants and municipalities to use for a period of two years. I would hasten to say that individual extensions we would not recommend be any longer than 30, 60, 90 days to allow the work to continue, but this tool would be available for two years and then sunset to ensure that it does not become a permanent burden on their approval system.

For the longer run, we must acknowledge there are necessary cultural and process changes that must take place in order to ensure that the province’s goals of a streamlined development approval process and delivering housing faster are not undermined. This will require a shift

in municipal thinking to do all that is necessary to meet approval timelines.

We encourage and look forward to working with all levels of government when we can collectively deliver much-needed housing to the consumer and be part of the housing supply solution.

Madam Chair, thank you very much for your time this afternoon. I look forward to the committee's questions.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you so much for your presentations, to everyone.

We will start, then, with the NDP for seven and a half minutes. MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Chair. I want to begin with a question for Ms. Majid from ACTO. I've just been informed as we've been meeting here of a housing situation in the south end of our city in Ottawa, something I've spoken to at this committee before, community called Manor Village, where the property owner, Smart Living, a real estate investment trust, is currently offering tenants \$50,000 to move out of their housing. Some of the landlord's representatives are framing this as an offer for those tenants to go and buy their own home because of the significant sum of money. As recently as a year ago, tenants were being offered a couple of months' rent to do the same thing.

What concerns me, Ms. Majid, is that that amount of money, significant as it may seem, might cover a low-income renter in our city for about two years, and then they're hurled into the open rental market, which is spiralling out of control, thanks to this government.

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I am concerned that powerful real estate investment trusts, which, as I understand from your presentation, you define as 25% of all property owners in the province of Ontario—I've heard different figures; that's a significant figure—are swooping into our municipalities, buying up big tracts of our affordable rental housing stock that we actually have and incentivizing those tenants to move out. What I've heard from Carolyn Whitzman, one of our country's housing experts who lives in Ottawa Centre, back home, is that for every one unit of affordable housing that is being built in Canada, we are losing seven because of practices like this. So what advice do you have to this government to make sure that these kinds of practices can be stopped? I can't imagine, from your presentation, that you would support losing affordable rental housing stock.

Ms. Dania Majid: We definitely do not support the loss of existing affordable housing units. They are a critical part of the strategy to address the housing crisis. We should be doing everything we can to preserve the existing affordable housing that we currently have and then expand it.

REITs are one player in the real estate market; they're not the only players, and not all corporate landlords are structured as REITs. We also have to remember that we have a lot of small-investor landlords who are entering the market, so we're talking about individuals who might own 15, five, 20 units, and they, too, are also having an impact on the market.

When it comes to REITs, their business practices—and you can read this on their website—is to maximize rents from sitting renters, and they will do it in many ways: above-guideline increases or, ideally, to push tenants out through cosmetic change and re-rent that unit for a much higher rent, and they're able to do that because of the vacancy decontrol loophole. We need to close that loophole because it is the major driver of the loss of existing affordable housing units in the province. Once a tenant moves out of an affordable housing unit, that unit is lost forever, because it will be rented at what the current market is bearing—in Toronto, we're looking at \$2,800 a month.

Mr. Joel Harden: If I could pursue this, because I know we don't have all the time—and I appreciated your presentation—what I've often heard Conservative colleagues say, when we talk about vacancy decontrol and dealing with this situation, is that this would choke off the supply that we're seeing in the market. But if I'm not mistaken, the municipalities of Vancouver and Montreal have vacancy control—they have these protections for the tenants—and those are very healthy rental markets for tenants and for landlords. Am I correct?

Ms. Dania Majid: Yes. We also have to remember that Ontario used to have vacancy control, up until the 1990s, so this is not something that's new to the province. It's something we're asking the province to bring back.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you.

Peggy, it's really great to see you. When you were talking about that smell of farmers' gold that I remember from being a kid in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I was thinking about the tension that must be happening to farm families right now in the affordability crisis we have, when we see oil companies make profits of 1,000%, since 2019 and this government. Unlike a Conservative government in England, they've done nothing to capture some of those windfall profits from the oil companies—all borne on the consumer and small business owners, which is what farmers are. They have done nothing on the affordability crisis of food. So I can only imagine that the pressure on farm families—while this government has been working for the big oil companies, working for the Galen Westons and the big food-gougers of this province—is immense. For those farm families—I can imagine they're trying to figure out a way to find some revenue for retirement; trying to find some revenue to send a kid to a skilled trade, to college, to university. They're dealing with the affordability crisis that this government has encouraged, like everybody else.

So if you could explain for us—this government is proposing the way in which land can be subdivided that would encroach upon arable land. But for those farm families—a lot of them may be under some serious financial pressure, and they may be pushed into sacrificing that arable land, because this government is doing nothing about the affordability crisis.

What advice do you have for this government to take some action on those affordability measures, so farmers

and their families aren't pushed into the situation of subdividing land, losing arable land that we need to feed our province?

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: One of the things that I believe government has similar to OFA is this ability to look at the big picture, to think beyond just the small, local community but to think broader. I think there is this great value in agricultural system mapping, and I think that trying to ensure that agricultural systems are healthy actually helps the farmer be more sustainable. The individual farmer probably will find great financial gain. The ironic thing is, every time you sell a lot, you actually drive the price of all the other acreages, so all the farms that stay actually see the cost of buying a field go up because they have development dollar pressure. I think that there is an—

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

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: Thanks.

I think there's an opportunity to—as well, you talked about the Grow Ontario Strategy. It talks about innovation and helping grow farms. This bill, the way it's worded, actually limits the growth. A typical concession—if all the houses go up, a 2,000-hog operation could hardly fit in the middle, and a 4,000-feeder-hog operation actually wouldn't be able to be there. So you won't be able to build new barns, and you won't be able to continue to fight inflation by growing your business.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you for the presentations.

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

I'll move over to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you, everyone, for coming in and sharing your stories and humour, in some cases, especially.

Just picking up on where my colleague was with you, Peggy, what struck me or stood out from your speaking time was the minimum distance separation from housing, and then as soon as you said Walkerton, the bells went off, a chill up my spine. So if you can walk us through that a bit more, because what we're hearing in the chamber is that farmers want this and farmers want to be able to shave off a section of their land for their children. So I would like to hear the full story, if I could.

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: Once again, I'll say, think big picture. If you want to protect wells and such, you have to ensure that they're far enough away. In conflict with that is a limited amount of agricultural land in this province—only 5% is agriculture. You cannot create farmland out of nothing. I farm in the north. The Canadian Shield is wonderful, but I'm not farming on the shield; I'm farming in the pockets of healthy soils. Your strategy, actually, is trying to map that, but again, if you push towards this vision of houses across the concession and the frontages, you actually limit the ability of farms to grow.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And we all know what happened at Walkerton, right? So thank you for sharing that.

Over to—Dania, is it?

Ms. Dania Majid: Yes, Dania.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you for your information. We were talking about this earlier as well with other people speaking, for the fines for landlords, whether there's proper enforcement, whether they're actually being handed out, whether they are sufficient enough to improve one's performance as a landlord. What do you think of a proper, robust tracking system, and what would that look like for you or for tenants, do you think?

Ms. Dania Majid: Sorry, a tracking system—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: For fines handed out to landlords. We're hearing that there's not—some fines are \$500 to \$3,000. It's not enough. Are they actually being enforced? So I'm just wondering if we should be looking at a proper tracking system.

Ms. Dania Majid: Yes, I mean, it would be helpful, and I think data is helpful in trying to understand how these provisions work and whether they're effective or not. We don't really know what the maximum fines being issued are. The Landlord and Tenant Board does produce decisions. The rental housing enforcement unit should be collecting data. That information isn't always public or readily available to the public. So we are operating in a bit of a black hole in terms of what fines are being issued, whether there are prosecutions happening and so on. But at the end of the day, we do have to remember that fines ultimately do not benefit the renter that has been unlawfully evicted or pushed out. Even if it's in good faith, that person has lost what probably was once an affordable unit and these fines won't go back to putting them whole again.

1430

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Seven and a half minutes, MPP Holland.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you for coming out today and for making your deputations. Peggy, in particular, it's good to see you again. I'm sure we'll be on the flight home.

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: We might be.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I see you more than my wife sometimes. I appreciate all the comments that have been made here. Specifically, Peggy, I wanted to just touch on some of the things you had spoken about. You've provided comments and answers to MPP McMahon's questions with regard to farming, and the examples you gave were more centred around livestock farming.

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: That's correct.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I just wanted to point that out, taking into consideration that there are many different types of farmland out there that we're speaking about that may or may not be developed moving forward.

We have in fact heard from farmers that they need the ability to provide for housing for generational family members who want to stay and work the farm and be a part of their family farms, or to provide housing for workers that they are required to bring in. There are a lot of migrant workers coming in and working on farms across the province that require housing, and they're looking to develop that housing in proximity to the farm where

they're working. To your point, this will reduce that traffic that you're concerned that allowing this development to take place will increase. By allowing this development, it could actually decrease the amount of traffic on the roads for farm workers travelling back and forth to the farms, if they're actually living close to the farms.

Does the OFA support allowing farmers the ability to develop housing options to support future and continued operations of their farms in a responsible way, taking into consideration the setbacks that you spoke of that, again, pertain more to livestock-type farming than other types of farming, and also taking into consideration the higher yields resulting from the measured investments that you spoke of that our government has made?

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: I'm really glad you asked the question. There are two portions in this bill that it will enable within the PPS. The first is what I spoke about, that we are not for the lot severances. The other piece is, just as you have committed to inside of the urban areas, you've suggested two housing units on the farm footprint. We are not against those houses or dwellings that could be on a farm footprint that are not severable. And they speak to your concerns about grandparents and parents and employees. They wouldn't have to get on the road at all because they would be right at the farm.

What farming looks like right now, on cropland—not just livestock, but cropland—it includes neighbours who drain their pool out onto the cropland and create a dead spot. It looks like garbage thrown over the fence because “that doesn't matter, it's just green space.” I have one farmer who was doing normal farm practices on his farm last fall and he got threatened with a gun for doing normal farm practices. Those are not livestock. But I could certainly talk to livestock issues too, people coming and taking selfies inside of the fence etc.

I guess the question to government is, if we are going to go this way, how will government help mitigate the challenges that arise from additional people in those farming communities? How are we going to support an agricultural system? How are we going to help me get my combine out on the road when my combine is almost as wide as the road is, and get to the next field when we know that people are going to be behind me with traffic? In fact, I was at Good Roads not that long ago. You're four times likely to have a fatal collision with a slow-moving vehicle than you are with an average collision. So I really think that we are adding liability and extra cost to municipalities and potentially to a province that has to help fund those things too.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I appreciate that. I think it's a bit of a stretch in that regard. You spoke about, when you're talking about farming, the ability for the farms to expand to sustain increased costs. Those are the same things that municipalities are dealing with. In a lot of cases, the only way they have to mitigate those increased costs is with development in their communities, and it has to be responsible development; I absolutely support that. But I have confidence in the farmers in being able to develop properties for workers and their family members that

won't put them at risk. They're going to be family members or workers who are well aware of the farm equipment you speak about that are going to be on the roads. So I think the liability is a little bit exaggerated for municipalities.

I'm going to turn the rest of my time over to Matthew.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to all the presenters for presenting today.

Chair, if you will indulge me in two minutes—great. I'll try to be very brief. I just want to encourage my colleague from Ottawa Centre to talk to his federal colleagues. The biggest concern that farmers tell me is the carbon tax, and it's the carbon tax on drying their grain, which they must do now. Ben Lobb, the federal member for Huron–Bruce, passed a private member's bill, supported by members from the NDP caucus federally, to exempt the carbon tax from grain drying. It was very popular in my riding, across rural Ontario, and I encourage the member across the way to talk to his federal colleagues on that aspect. And I don't know of any big oil companies in Ontario, but that's another point.

Thank you, Peggy—it's nice to see you again—for being here. I have two minutes. I don't know if I'll get a question in, but it's nice to see you here.

Perth–Wellington has the most farmers probably in all of Ontario, big livestock, probably way more cows and cattle and pigs and everything else but humans. Your example of 2,000-hog barn: You probably could build a 2,000-hog barn in Perth–Wellington right now because there's a thing called—as you know; I'm explaining for my colleagues. There's an item called the nutrient management system, which is required for every farmer to have to spread manure. If you have 2,000 hogs, that's a lot of manure. There's also dairy farmers, there's cattle farmers. They all have to have the land to spread the manure. Roughly—again, rough math: A 120-herd dairy facility, barn, would require roughly 500 acres per year to spread the manure—again, it's rough math; don't quote me on it—but to spread that manure as well. So already we're seeing that already there's very little room to expand to the extent that you are mentioning there.

To my colleague's comments: I have heard from some farmers around—they currently own a rental in our small towns for the farm workers, and that is now out of the market because they're taking that up and they want to make sure that's on the market, because, as you know very well, Peggy, from your members, rentals in rural Ontario are very scarce. So having that additional option there as well is key.

How much time do I have?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): None.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I've got no time left? Sorry, everyone. We've got round 2.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. There's round 2.

We'll go to the official opposition, if they would like. MPP Harden for seven and a half.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you. Just to go back to the member from Perth–Wellington’s rather interesting reasoning there, I want to get into this question of how we protect arable land in Ontario because I think Peggy is raising a really important point. What I was trying to understand is why this government is not listening to farmers when they’re saying we have to protect arable land. In fact, as I’m looking at it, you’re putting more pressure on people who are already financially pressured at the moment, operating farm organizations, to potentially lose more arable land. I don’t understand that.

I want to throw it to our friend who joined us from the Building Industry and Land Development Association. When we think about the pressure on arable land and ecologically sensitive land, I want to ask, Mr. Wilkes, have you or anybody you work with asked this government to consider new incursions and major incursions into greenbelt territories? Because this committee has already heard deputations to the effect that our major urban municipalities have enough capacity to intensify and develop within that we don’t have to encroach upon greenbelt areas or sensitive areas that we need for farming. Have you asked this government to pursue its current direction, or anybody you work for, in making further incursions into the greenbelt?

1440

Mr. Dave Wilkes: I’ll give you a short answer and a long answer if I may, MPP Harden. No, BILD has not advocated for any discussions within the greenbelt, and that has been a consistent position that we’ve had.

However, if we look at available land for development—and we’ve done a couple of studies that look at land use within the GTA in particular, and what we are seeing is that the amount of land that is available for housing and for growth is dropping like a stone. So there are three areas that we can develop.

Intensification within current urban areas—there are challenges with that, and a lot of community resistance, as I’m sure you’re aware—

Mr. Joel Harden: We can work with you on that.

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Yes—and land supply. As it dwindles, the cost increases, which creates challenges around affordability.

Within the yellowbelt, also within the urban area—our last study was in 2018. We’re just updating it now. It should be available by mid-June, so I would be pleased to share that with the committee and members of all parties. Some 18,000 units—sorry, “units”—18,000 hectares were available in 2017; by 2018, that had dropped to 12,000 units—excuse me, I have “units” on the brain—hectares. So we’re seeing a dramatic reduction in land that is available for housing and residential development.

Mr. Joel Harden: I take your point, Mr. Wilkes—

Mr. Dave Wilkes: And on the—

Mr. Joel Harden: Chair, if I could just have my time back, because I want to make sure I transfer to my colleague.

The reason I think you’re having the distinction between units and hectares here is because we want to

build intensified amounts of units within the hectares that we have.

I want to pass to MPP Bell, Chair, who can continue some of our questioning in this round.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to all the presenters for coming in today.

My first question is to Peggy from the OFA. Since the passage of Bill 23, and now with the proposed changes to how we build in Ontario, the changes to the growth plan and the provincial planning statement, has this—what are you seeing with farmland? Has it impacted the price of farmland? Are you seeing an increase in speculation on farmland? Paint us a picture.

Ms. Peggy Brekvelde: When the 7,000 acres inside of the greenbelt became available for development, that actually drove people to start believing that they could develop in more places—but I won’t say that it wasn’t already purchased by people who weren’t farmers before. It doesn’t matter who owns it, I want it to be—agricultural land is such a limited resource that agriculture is considered the most important priority that we can put there. It feeds us, and it’s going to feed us for generations if we let it. So the speculative price has gone up on farmland.

As far as the other concerns I have, I see rural municipalities’ planning departments in complete chaos because they don’t know what the next thing is going to be, and because they just feel like a lot of them have put a lot of heart and soul into making great plans that include agricultural consideration and they’re seeing them all being torn away. They planned for the future, they thought about agriculture, and now they’re struggling with it because everything that they’ve put in as safeguards is being torn down.

So I certainly think the impact has already begun, and I don’t see it stopping if we’re going to continue down this path.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that. I was curious myself, too.

My next question is to David from BILD. Thank you so much for coming. At the same time as Bill 97 was introduced, the government also made changes to the growth plan and the provincial policy statement to create a new provincial planning statement. The government, I noticed, is proposing to end firm density requirements for municipalities and new developments. Do you support that proposed change?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: I think it’s important to clarify that the PPS recommendations are part of a consultation right now, so these changes are part of an ongoing conversation.

Where we think that it’s important is that the density targets that were in place often couldn’t be met. They often didn’t reflect the realities of the market and the demands in those particular areas, and we’re hamstringing, if you will, the development in those regions. So, yes, we do believe in more flexibility that reflects the type of housing that is being demanded in those regions.

We also support a number of other things that are in the PPS such as conversion of employment zones, where it

makes more sense for those lands to be used for residential, while protecting heavy industry like manufacturing and industrial, and ensuring that there are proper barriers or divisions between residential lands and those. So there's a number of things that are really positive in the PPS that we'll be commenting on that we believe can help alleviate the housing concerns that we have.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that. The second question I have is around BILD's position on decisions that the ministry has made to expand municipal boundaries and override official plans. Is that something that you are in support of?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Thank you for the question. It's in the context of looking where serviced land is. As I was indicating to your colleague, intensified land is very costly. Yellowbelt land is dropping. The whitebelt land will take probably 15% to 20% years to develop, because we don't have the necessary infrastructure.

Where we see urban boundary expansions, it does two things. In those areas where there is serviced land available and can bring housing on quicker, we have the goal—as everybody knows—of 1.5 million homes by 2031. That was set in the context of not having the immigration growth that we now see. So I think looking for opportunities to identify land that can be brought on stream quicker is the right thing to do.

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

MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have more questions for Peggy. I'm not a farmer, so I would never have the audacity to say something a farmer said was a stretch or an exaggeration. I really appreciate you sharing your years of experience, knowledge and lived experience with us.

So, back to liability, because I think we're all worried—should be worried—about the safety of Ontarians. We heard, actually, today in the chamber, from MPP Vanthof, about tractor-trailers up where he lives on the roads and the collisions up there, so I'm very interested in hearing more about the liability, the concerns. You were mentioning combines on the road, and I take that very seriously, so I'd like to hear from you on that.

Ms. Peggy Brekveld: Some of the things seem so simple; garbage thrown over the fence doesn't seem like such a big deal. But metal cans, when swallowed by cows, actually can cause life-threatening problems. On the road, when my son wants to take the combine down the road, we have to go to the next road and block the traffic so he can get down the road that far, and then we go farther etc. But there is no room to pass. There's not even room for the other traffic lane to go by in my community.

I believe that the fact of water quality should ring very loudly in the ears of those around this table, and farmers take it seriously too. That's why we also agree there should be some space.

Perth actually has done a lot of work to limit the amount of houses in rural areas. They actually had the lowest

number of exceptions to the rule. They were at 0.8 residences per thousand acres in the last—I can't remember how many years, compared to Prince Edward county, which was at 6.37 or something. You are one of the best regions for ensuring that that ag system is awesome.

I will also say that there are many other places that don't have that kind of strength inside of their municipality, and it costs more for services for the municipality for houses scattered around the region than for those inside of the urban hub. OFA firmly believes we need houses too. We encourage the government to facilitate, incentivize those houses inside of those hubs. I want a place where I can go to the bank. I want a place where I can buy groceries and where I can do the things—play baseball with my kids etc. I think those things are better when we encourage the hub to build and build in and up and do a great job there. It helps rural areas too.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And you should know, Peggy—I'm not sure if you've seen the submission from the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario alumni, but they are very concerned about agriculture lands as well, so just take a look at that.

My last question is for BILD, Dave Wilkes.

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

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Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm not sure if you saw the city of Toronto submission, but they're asking that the effective date for fee refunds be extended to December 31, 2023. Also, they're recommending the legislation to stop the clock be recognized. Your thoughts on that?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: We support the provisions within Bill 97 for July 1, and so I will remain with that position.

The stop-the-clock mechanism: I assume that's similar to the pause provision that we recommended. We are supportive of that, because we think that—our members don't want their money back. The members want to have the applications in place approved so that they can build housing. If there needs to be additional time agreed to by the applicant and the municipal partner within a defined scope, within a defined time frame—that's why we put this recommendation forward.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So it seems similar.

Mr. Dave Wilkes: It does seem similar.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thanks very much. We now move to the government side for seven and a half minutes, to MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Chair: I always want to start by thanking all of our guests. We appreciate your time, we value your opinions and what you bring to the table. I've been enlightened by a lot of things today, and I know a little bit more about pigs than I did before the day started, and I appreciate that. I truly do.

I did have some questions. I will address them initially to Dave Wilkes. You provided some information about your side of the issues and partnerships, and municipalities and applicants needing partnerships. Can you be specific about the actual requirement that municipalities are imposing on applicants that are causing processing delays? I think this is an important issue for the bill.

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Thank you very much for the question. And if I may use 20 seconds of your time: The sweet smell of success for me is allergies, but that's a whole different thing.

There are a couple of examples that I'd like to share with the committee. In Vaughan, for example, they've added pre-application requirements without authority, requiring consultation, clearances, a public meeting, a design review and technical peer reviews, all upfront before the actual application time clock starts. This is all done in advance. It's outside of the conditions of the Planning Act for the requirements, and there's no regulations or rules around it, so it can be used as a tool of obstruction and delay.

Also, we're seeing in Markham there is a series of pre-consultation requirements for site plan approval. In Markham, the best case scenario for approvals was 15 months. With these new requirements, we're going to see that pre-consultation period going to 30 months without any guarantee that, after all those conditions are undertaken and we get into the actual application stage, the applicant will have an approval for the development they're looking for.

Those are two examples. I referenced a few others in my remarks. There's a tendency—rather than look at how we can improve the processes, how we can create the process and cultural change that we need to speed up the approvals and meet the deadlines that are already established in the Planning Act, the energy has been focused on, how do we work around them? How do we avoid refunding fees—which, as I indicated to your colleague, is not the goal. The goal really is to ensure that we have the approvals.

We're very troubled by the growing tendencies that we see from municipalities to just say, "No, we're not going to accept your application until you do everything that normally would've been done within the approval time frame."

Ms. Laura Smith: Time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Four and a half minutes.

Ms. Laura Smith: Okay. Can you comment on the protection on employment areas to key employment uses that have unique uses for lands, like manufacturing or warehousing?

Mr. Dave Wilkes: Once again, within the provincial policy statement and the consultations that will go on from that document, there are requirements that heavy industrial and manufacturing are protected and that they have the buffer zones between them and residential, which is an appropriate course of action.

What the PPS consultation does look at is other employment zones where potentially it could be better used for residential and allowing transition to that usage. There's a balance there that we think that the PPS recommendations achieve, and we're supportive of that, particularly looking at conversions of land that was formerly designated for employment that no longer is serving that purpose.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you.

I'm going to be sharing my time with Vijay Thanigasalam, please.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Laura. Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I want to thank Dania, Peggy and Dave for your presentations. Thanks for being here.

My question is to Dania. In terms of the tenants' protection, I'm sure that we all read that our government is proposing legal protection for tenants when it comes to renovations, when it comes to a landlord's own evictions. For example, for the renovation purposes, when evicting a tenant to renovate a unit we are proposing that landlords would be required to provide a report from a qualified third party stating that the unit must be vacant due to proper renovations and also give a six-month grace period for the tenants to move back in. Also, we are proposing the strictest penalty in Canada, proposing maximum fines for offences under the act, up to \$100,000 for individuals and for corporations up to \$500,000. This does definitely send a very strong message to all the bad actors out there that violate the Residential Tenancies Act.

So my question to Dania is that, in your opinion, what's the most useful proposed legislation in this bill? For example, do you feel like this will benefit the tenants, the new tenants' protection in this part of the bill? And how would this make the change for tenants to have a better living condition in Ontario?

Ms. Dania Majid: We appreciate the government's attempt to address renovations, but as we've learned from Bill 184, band-aid solutions are not going to address the root cause driving renovations, which is vacancy decontrol. So what we anticipate, just based on our past experience, is it will have minimal effect. The Landlord and Tenant Board is in chaos right now, as documented by the Ombudsman report, and where we do have bad actors, tenants are going to be waiting maybe two years to be able to go to the board and enforce their rights, when we do have a landlord that is not acting in good faith. So there are multiple pieces that have to come in play together, if we really do want to see tenants protected in Ontario.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you.

When it comes to the air conditioning, do you think the changes under this bill to the rules, to enhance the access to the air conditioning, will benefit the tenants here in the province of Ontario?

Ms. Dania Majid: Again, we definitely can see the problems that are going to arise. By having landlords and tenants trying to figure out when their rents should go up and when their rents should go down—and again going back to the board to enforce it when landlords don't move the rent down like they should—I think it's going to ultimately cause a lot of frustrations for tenants.

The Residential Tenancies Act requires the landlord to provide a unit that's fit for habitation and that should be the responsibility of the landlord.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you. And what is your overall feedback in terms of—

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

Thank you very much to the presenters who were here for this hour. We'll give you time to change places with the next group of presenters. So, thank you again for coming. Thanks, David. Thanks, Peggy. Thank you, Dania.

ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES
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The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): So as we're getting ready, there's a bit of a change. The first presenter, Kevin Love, is unable to appear today. So we'll just have two—
Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Is it? Okay. Well, we won't speak of that.

So we're going to have the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and RESCON, the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, some virtual, some in-person. We'll just give a couple of minutes for the room to settle, but we will start with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario first. I think we're pretty good now.

If you want to start, Mr. Best, that would be great. Just state your name, and you have up to seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Colin Best: Thank you, MPP Scott. My name is Colin Best. I'm the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, otherwise known as AMO. I am joined today in person by AMO's director of policy and government relations, Lindsay Jones.

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While I'm here to speak primarily about Bill 97, it would be impossible not to refer to the broader suite of work the province has undertaken in its efforts to build 1.5 million homes by 2031. Make no mistake; AMO and its member municipalities want to support the government in making the best decisions possible in the interests of the public. We want to help build 1.5 million homes.

In our opinion, Bill 97 does three key things: It places a focus on renters and rental housing, responds to municipal feedback and makes some improvements to provincial development tools.

AMO supports Bill 97's recognition of the importance of the rental housing market and strong tenant-landlord relationships in making housing more affordable and preventing homelessness. As a result, we appreciate proposals to strengthen protections against evictions, including those due to renovations and landlords' own use of the property. We have long advocated that protecting rental housing stock is of critical importance to address housing affordability. This means that we can support a standardized framework for rental replacement bylaws to help municipalities to better understand and use this important tool.

I'll now hand it over to Lindsay Jones.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Thanks so much, President Best, for your comments.

I'll turn to members for questions.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Do you have any presentation?

Ms. Lindsay Jones: No.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's okay—not quite yet—okay, then.

All right, we'll move to the next presenter, and then we'll do questions after that.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Oh, hold on. We're just clarifying if the Residential Construction Council of Ontario is on. No, we have no air.

So you are correct: We are moving to questions and answers. We'll go for seven and a half minutes to the official opposition. MPP Harden. Sorry; I know it's quick, so if you want to take a second—is that all right?

Mr. Joel Harden: That's okay. It gives us a lot of time to talk to our friends, who are the experts of wanting to understand what's going on in municipalities. So it's a pleasure to be with you this afternoon. Thank you for the work you do.

What I've heard in our city in Ottawa, from our new mayor, Mark Sutcliffe, is that the city never asked for an extension of its urban boundary. We had a heated debate at our city council in the last instalment of our city council about where the boundary should be. You may or may not have heard about the Tewin project that's been a controversial project in our city. The city staff of Ottawa advised the city of Ottawa not to do this project, because the cost of extending municipal services way out to the south end of our city to support this project would be burdensome to the city, but that city council, under the previous mayoralty, decided to go ahead with it. So that was a fractious enough debate for Ottawa.

What we learned since is the government in its current proposals is expanding the Ottawa urban boundary even further. I have heard, as I was saying in the last round of questioning, from folks like Mr. Phil Pothén from Environmental Defence and other folks who have said the capacity of the large urban municipalities—and I know we're not the centre of the world; I'm not trying to allege that as an Ottawa politician. But we actually can be a big part of what the government wants in a solution of 1.5 million homes over 10 years if we pursue with seriousness an intensification agenda, and those of us who are urban representatives help make the case for intensification against exclusionary zoning, thinking about transit-friendly communities—things we like to talk about all the time. But it would seem to me that this bill is not doing much for that debate that has been very fractious for my own city.

I'm wondering if you have any reflections, based upon your contacts in Ottawa or in any other situations in which—it would seem that this piece of legislation we're debating at committee this afternoon is going to push us into more of a situation in which areas far-flung from existing centres of municipalities are going to be incentivized for development, and whether we're thinking about arable land or ecologically sensitive areas, it would seem

like that's a step in the wrong direction. But I would appreciate what AMO has to say on this.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Thank you so much for the question. AMO is definitely supportive of an intensification agenda. It just makes good sense when it comes to cost efficiency. You mentioned the cost of servicing. It's absolutely AMO's position that municipalities in development need to leverage servicing where it exists. It also makes good sense from an environmental perspective in many cases. It enables municipalities to be able to protect those lands that have been put aside for environmental purposes.

We don't think, though, that this bill necessarily creates situations where municipalities have to expand their settlement boundaries. It's definitely the case that there are provisions in the bill and the related provincial policy statement that enable a more flexible process when it comes to decisions about settlement boundary expansion, but we believe that it puts the power in the hands of municipalities and it enables municipalities to make the right decisions for their own local context. You're absolutely right to remark that the municipalities across the province have very different needs and very different circumstances, whether you're in Ottawa or you're in Westport. We do advocate for and believe that the bill does give municipalities enhanced flexibility when it comes to a variety of different policies and frameworks that will give them the option to enable more housing if it's the right decision for their local context.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you. I guess I'm wondering, from a standpoint of being able to be an active partner from a municipal perspective in building affordable housing—it's an important adjective for us because what we see in our city, rather like this in one, in Toronto, are cranes all over the place. But they're not building affordable rental or affordable ownership housing. By and large, this is just the placement of very beautiful-looking downtown condos.

We have to talk, Chair, I think, about how legislation interacts with other pieces of legislation. The bill we had at this committee before, Bill 23—AMO staked out a very clear position, as I recall it, that the cancellation or the option of taking away development charges would hinder the ability of a municipality to be an active player in building affordable rental housing. I know our new mayor has talked about city staff estimating the price tag of Bill 23 for the city of Ottawa being somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$38 million to \$39 million, and our affordable housing budget in the city alone is \$14 million. So what could be added to this bill to make sure that Ottawa and other municipalities could be active players in housing? Because it would seem like the private market right now is building a lot of good affluent housing, but we're not seeing affordable housing. So what could be done to this bill to make sure that, unlike in Bill 23, this bill gives your members more power to be active partners in building affordable housing?

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Thank you so much for the question. You're absolutely right that AMO took a very

strong position on Bill 23 when it came to the impacts of that bill on municipalities being able to effectively support growth of any kind of housing because of the impacts on infrastructure funding, as well as really questioned the ability of the bill to move forward in this area of affordable housing, which is where AMO believes that the debate needs to be focusing.

You've asked the question, what could be done to this bill to be able to enable that? Well, I think that we would be very interested in seeing provisions in this bill that repeal some of the changes to the Development Charges Act that were in Bill 23. Those changes have fundamental impacts on the ability of municipalities to be able to collect funding to support housing services, and a very significant impact on the ability of, in particular, large urban municipalities to be able to continue to support the development of more deeply affordable housing, as well as to be able to continue to service existing housing. So while we think that Bill 97 is definitely not Bill 23 from a variety of different perspectives, we are still keen to understand and work with the government to be able to address the gap in funding that Bill 23 created for municipalities.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you.

How much time do I have left, Chair?

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you very much. It's nice to see AMO here today.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McMahon, please, four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much for coming in—or joining by Zoom. I appreciate it. I'm always very curious and eager to hear thoughts from AMO because you have a solid track record of knowledge and engagement. So I'm just going to go on—I'm not sure if you saw the first submission from the city of Toronto. I'm just questioning what you think of some of their recommendations. One was with regard to the fee refunds being extended to December 31, 2023, and also that the legislation include stop-the-clock provisions so there's a bit of a back-and-forth time allotted for discussions with developers and applicants. What are your thoughts on that?

1510

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Thank you so much for the question.

We definitely think that the fee refund regime would benefit from a bit of a rethink. In fact, I think we are suggesting that we might even go further than just delaying its implementation for another six months and instead potentially repeal the regime in its entirety.

There was an effective discussion with one of my colleagues earlier. I think Mr. Wilkes was talking about some of the unintended consequences that we're seeing in the interaction between municipalities and developers, and municipalities now being left with no choice but to not accept applications until they're fully complete. I think what this underscores is the very iterative nature of the planning process, and it really underscores that the only way that we are going to be able to speed up development

is to be able to work collaboratively together. So it's not the municipalities' fault that the process is taking so long; it's not the developers' fault; it's not the provincial agencies, who are also contributing to the process. But we need to find a way to work together. And we think that regimes that are punitive for one party only is not the way to go.

So we have recommended that the fee refund scheme be revoked, particularly in instances where all of the parties, including the developers, are in agreement.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: With regard to the definition of “area of employment”—the city of Toronto is very worried about this. They do not support the revised definition to remove—as it could have the potential to remove approximately 25% of the city's employment areas, and putting at risk approximately 150,000 jobs currently found in those areas. Thoughts on that?

Ms. Lindsay Jones: I think we have a different understanding of what the provisions would actually mean with respect to employment. AMO's understanding is that the bill simply makes the process of converting an employment area to a non-employment area more streamlined, as opposed to necessarily requiring any changes.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's 60 seconds left.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Again, this would seem to be a way for municipalities to have greater flexibility to be able to plan and make the right decisions for their own local circumstances as opposed to having the province be necessarily as involved in some of those decisions.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm not sure if you were here for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's talk, but they're very worried about the agriculture component, and so are the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario alumni. What are your thoughts on preserving agricultural land?

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh. We might have to continue that one, but that's the question.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: AMO is definitely supportive of being able to have—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll have to come back to you. Sorry.

Over to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Just to clarify, Chair: Is Rescon on the Zoom?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): They will present after the first round, yes. I think they're still on, but they will.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Great.

Thank you, Lindsay and Colin—it's nice to see you again, Colin, virtually—for coming in and your deputation to the committee. I appreciate your feedback, as always, on our housing supply action plans.

I know, with this bill that Minister Clark has tabled, the freezing of 74 provincial fees at 2023-24 rates—I know, demonstrating that the province, as well—we're asking municipalities to help us lower the costs of getting permits

and the fees you were mentioning earlier, Lindsay, but also, I 100% hear you that the province needs to take a step on that. So freezing those 74 fees across essentially the entire government, not necessarily MMAH, and around those aspects.

So I was just wondering if Colin and yourself could elaborate on how a regulation to enable the use the site plan control for residential developments of 10 or fewer units in certain circumstances may help your members in their deliberations.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Thanks so much.

Colin, I feel badly that I've been speaking. I'm not sure if you wanted an opportunity to answer. No? All right. Thank you.

Mr. Colin Best: Madam Chair, Lindsay is the expert, not me.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There you go, Lindsay.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Thank you.

We were very pleased to see this part of the legislation for two reasons: first, because of the actual implications of the site plan control for developments under 10 units. It's a particular area of interest for smaller communities where there are a lot of developments near the shoreline. The ability to preserve the natural character of those communities is a critical importance and a value for the people who choose to live there, and giving the municipalities the tools to be able to do that is very important.

We also thought that the inclusion of this provision in the legislation signalled an important overall element of the government's approach, which is the need for change but then to listen to municipalities and other stakeholders and course-correct where necessary. So we thought that seeing this course correction was of significant importance to us to see that the government is living up to its commitment to listen to stakeholders and to make changes where appropriate.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you for those comments, Lindsay. I appreciate it.

Just building on that as well, as you and Colin both know, our government is committed to tabling a housing supply bill every year of four-year mandates, in addition to the ones we tabled in the previous mandate. So I was just wondering if you or Colin again would elaborate on what you would like to see as AMO, just for the people in the room, in future iterations of a housing supply action plan and what regulations potentially could help get more homes built.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Well, I think that we are, again, very interested in putting financing for infrastructure and servicing back on track as part of the housing supply action plans. It's still a critical uncertainty for municipalities. We are confident that the government will follow through with its commitment to offset the fiscal impacts of Bill 23, but for now, the uncertainty with respect to that piece we think does start to threaten some of our collective ability to move forward on some of those targets. That's a key one.

We're also, I think, quite keen to understand from a natural heritage perspective where the government is

going. Bill 23 announced some significant changes to the role of conservation authorities. The provincial policy statement does not yet provide the sufficient level of detail for municipalities to truly understand how they fit into the overall system and be able to come up with concrete implementation plans.

I think that those are two outstanding areas that we're keen to work with the government around to be able to answer the questions to get the overall implementation approach on track.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Great.

Vijay has a question.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Two and a half minutes to MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks, Lindsay and Colin, for your deputation.

I just want to continue where my colleague MPP Rae left off. In terms of—as AMO, and working with all the municipalities—in this bill we are partnering with all the municipalities to help create our goal of 1.5 million homes, and this is something that we've been asking other deputants as well. My question to you, overall: How do you think this bill would help municipalities to increase the supply and the attainability of housing in their respective municipalities and for all Ontarians?

1520

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Thank you for the question. I do think that overall, what the bill does is create a framework that then does enhance the flexibility of municipalities to be able to make decisions in their own communities that can support housing options. Definitely, when you look at the bill in coordination with the draft provincial policy statement, the ability for municipalities to pursue different options when it comes to processes like employment area conversion, like settlement boundary changes as well as different changes on the agricultural side of things, it definitely, taken as a whole, increases the flexibility of municipalities to be able to make the right choices.

We fundamentally believe that being able to put the power in the hands of municipal governments is what is going to be able to make the difference in terms of being able to reach the 1.5-million-homes target.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thirty seconds remaining.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Lindsay.

In the 30 seconds, I just want to see if—Colin, do you want to add anything on top of what Lindsay mentioned, in terms of how this bill would increase the supply and attainability of housing in respect to municipalities for Ontarians? Do you want to add anything on top of what she said?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You've got eight seconds.

Mr. Colin Best: Yes. Just adding to Lindsay's comments, which I agree with completely, is that we need some definitions of the—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sorry, that's all the time we have. Sorry, Colin.

We do have the Residential Construction Council of Ontario. Mr. Lyall was able to connect—if we would give him up to seven minutes for his presentation and then followed by the second round of questions.

I'll ask Mr. Lyall to please begin and state your name at the start.

Mr. Richard Lyall: Richard Lyall. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act.

Most of you will be familiar with the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, also known as Rescon. We're a council of builders in the province, and we build basically all the housing. We do social housing, we do apartments, condos, low-rise, semis—you name it—and some infrastructure around that, and light commercial too.

While today, your deliberations focus on Bill 97, I'd like to take this opportunity to convey to you our strong support for the wide array of legislation and policy which was launched by the government as it seeks to address this housing supply and affordability crisis. We are encouraged by the strong commitment this government has shown with respect to expediting the construction of much-needed housing across Ontario, particularly in our largest municipalities, where demand is greatest and housing pressures are enormous in terms of affordability. Let's not forget our population has increased 68% since the 1970s but our supply of housing [*inaudible*] 23%.

The consequences of the [*inaudible*] unprecedented [*inaudible*] numbers are almost unbelievable. For many [*inaudible*]

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Mr. Lyall?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Yes?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We just couldn't hear you there. Can you turn something up?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Oh, sorry. Okay, yes. Is that better?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A little bit, yes—

Mr. Richard Lyall: Sorry about that. Do you want me to—I'll just pick up where I left off, if you like.

The consequences of the housing affordability and supply crisis in the province are far-reaching and unprecedented. I've never seen numbers like this, and I've been in this business for 30 years. Prior to that, I was in economic development, trade negotiations, trade relations and trade and technology policy in the government.

For many individuals and families, this current situation creates pressures that are threatening and undercutting every aspect of their lives, and this is truly unacceptable. For our cities and towns, regardless of the region of Ontario, the situation is a generational threat to our continued economic prosperity. For our young people, who are among the most affected by this crisis, the options are stark. Even with the changes that we're working on right now, it's going to get worse before it gets better. We still have delays with other levels of government getting with the program, if I can put it that way.

For example, in the city of Toronto, the ability to afford to purchase a home now requires a salary of well over

\$200,000 a year, and if you're looking to rent an apartment, well, I think you've all seen the numbers in the papers: up above \$3,000 a month, a 13% increase, some say a 20% increase depending on the area. By the way, this is the first time the average rent has risen to that level in history.

Let's be clear: If we don't effectively and quickly address the housing affordability crisis, our most important resource of the future, our young people, are already choosing to leave. We tax housing like we tax alcohol. Taxes on new housing are 31%. There's no other jurisdiction that does that. All aspects of our province, from our diversity to our economic prosperity, will be affected for generations to come.

It is in this context of these realities that, today, we review the latest legislative effort undertaken by the provincial government to address the crisis. Bill 97 amends seven statutes. With respect to the proposed changes to rental replacement regulations, we recognize, of course, that Bill 23 has already provided to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing authorities with respect to the demolition and conversion of rental properties.

In general terms, we understand the need to protect the current stock of residential rental properties. While draft regulations will more comprehensively outline the specifics of the intent of this legislation, we take no major exception to the amendments contained within Bill 97. We would encourage that consideration be given to a more flexible policy structure with respect to the nature of rental replacement units. Replacement units should, of course, align with the homes they are replacing. However, recognition should be forthcoming with regard to the evolution of the design standards and innovations for new units that may not exactly reflect older spaces. In this context, it would be beneficial to facilitate the creation of more units rather than compelling builders to re-create square-footage spaces that exactly replicate older apartments.

The amendments from Bill 23 on site plan regulations affecting 10 units or less are understandable within 120 metres of a shoreline or 300 metres of a railway line, provided that it is not unnecessarily onerous and is not overly problematic from a building perspective.

The delay with respect to Bill 109's application refund requirements is, of course, a fait accompli and these provisions will come into effect July 1. So we do not take exception to this provision, but look forward to the implementation of these protocols starting this summer as they do have the ability to incentivize municipalities to meet the timelines.

One provision related to this, the authority to exclude certain municipalities from these sanctions, could potentially be of concern and we will be following any implementation of this closely. We believe that this potential financial impact for municipalities failing to meet timelines is an important incentive to get things done more quickly—accountability.

Concerning employment lands, we believe that permitting conversions for residential use where appropriate is important. Too many currently zoned employment lands could be converted to much-needed residential use in areas where certain employment uses no longer make sense. We

hope that this provision does not needlessly allow municipalities to protect status quo policies where there are no longer necessary.

The ability of the minister to exempt downstream approvals associated with ministerial zoning orders and the potential exemption of the requirement to comply with provincial and municipal policies with respect to approvals is a sound policy.

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

Mr. Richard Lyall: Consistent with the position we have been promoting for some time, we support the bill's potential to look at expanded use of modular housing options.

I would also like to take note of the work on the combined provincial policy statement. The objectives of generating more land for housing, freeing up land for development and supporting residential infrastructure, among other goals, are important and worthy of our support and all other housing legislation advanced by the government to actually support construction of housing.

While we review Bill 97 and consider the impacts of other legislation and policy statements, it is crucial that we remember that the core of all of our discussions is people: people who need affordable housing. We have to more than double our current levels of production, which is a massive challenge by itself, and if we don't do that, the consequences—well, we're already starting to feel them. We're seeing them in various ways with homelessness problems, what's happening with Toronto transit. I don't know if anybody's been a train there recently, but it's not good, and we've got the future—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you. I'm afraid your time is up, but you might be able to expand in questions.

I'll now move to the official opposition, MPP Bell, for their seven-and-a-half-minute round.

1530

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you so much, Richard, Lindsay and Colin, for coming in and sharing your expertise today.

I'm going to start my questions with AMO. My first question is about the new Homelessness Prevention Program funding that the Conservatives rolled out in the latest budget. When you factor in the loss of COVID money, it is actually a cut compared to the previous year of over \$100 million.

But I just want to talk a little bit about the funding formula. What are municipalities saying to you about who got what and what the new funding formula they're using to allocate homelessness funding looks like? Does AMO have a position on that? Have you looked at it?

Ms. Lindsay Jones: Thank you for the question. I do think I would be remiss if we didn't say that municipalities are incredibly pleased with the additional investment of \$202 million annually into the Homelessness Prevention Program. You're absolutely correct that it doesn't quite make up for the investments on the social services relief fund side of things, but at the same time, it is now a more predictable base funding that then gives municipalities the ability to make long-term plans related to homelessness prevention.

With respect to the funding formula, it's not an area that AMO has an official position around, but we do understand that there is greater equity when it comes to availability for funding in northern communities. Previous funding formulas for homelessness prevention were definitely focused more on larger urban areas in the south in a way that maybe didn't recognize that homelessness and the challenges that cause it are also really significant issues in the north.

The fact that more northern municipalities are getting greater shares of the funding does result in areas and municipalities such as Ottawa that are receiving less funding. So we're looking forward to being able to work with government because we think it's a good first step, but we don't think that it is necessarily going to be what solves the homelessness crisis. Hopefully, at that point, we're able to address some of the needs that all the municipalities have in a way that enables everybody to move forward on these important homelessness goals.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that. I do also have some concerns. As you know, Ottawa received enough to build two affordable homes in the last rollout of money. But that's certainly not AMO that did that.

The other question I have is really around Bill 23. It has been six months now since Bill 23 has been enacted. We are seeing a whole range of *[inaudible]* about what impact that's having on municipalities in particular. We're seeing announcements about delays in infrastructure. We're seeing across the board increases in property taxes, partly because of Bill 23, partly because of rising costs; it's a combination. Then we're also hearing some issues around municipalities' ability to maintain and build affordable housing and shelters.

What are you hearing from your municipalities about the impacts of Bill 23?

Ms. Lindsay Jones: I think we hear a lot with respect to the need for clarity about the government's commitment with respect to offsetting the fiscal costs of Bill 23. We appreciate very much the commitment that Minister Clark has made to municipalities to work with us to be able to offset this important gap. But to date, we have not received any further information with respect to how that will happen. We were pleased to see the announcement last week that the government will be proceeding with audits of development charge reserve funds in a small number of municipalities, but we are eagerly awaiting additional details with respect to how that will translate into clarity for individual municipalities, because it is definitely the case that projects are getting cancelled. Decisions and approvals are getting delayed in a way that will have real implications for municipalities' ability to move forward with some of the very important servicing decisions that are required to support the building of the 1.5 million homes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: And just to be clear: To the best of AMO's knowledge, no municipality has received funding to make them whole—except for the city of Toronto, but they're not a member of yours. Would that be a summary that's fair?

Ms. Lindsay Jones: That's correct.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It has been six months now, and municipalities are wondering how they're going to fill this gap. Okay. It's good to know.

The other question I had is around the decision by Bill 23 to exempt developments that meet the "affordable housing" definition. To be clear, this is a definition of affordable housing that is market-based—it's 80% of average market rent, or 80% of the sale price. So if you're looking at Brampton, a home that retails for about \$800,000 would meet the "affordable housing" definition and would be exempt from developer fees. I want to make it clear that that's not exactly affordable.

Is AMO tracking the number of developers that are building affordable housing under Bill 23, or do you know any municipalities that are?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 60 seconds left.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: AMO is still waiting for the government bulletin to come out that actually allows municipalities to understand what "affordable housing" actually means, as defined in Bill 23. While we've made and various people can make different assumptions about what that term means, it is something that requires a government bulletin to come out, and to date, that has not been issued. That continues to create some very significant uncertainty, as well, with respect to planning, with respect to servicing, because it's a fundamental part of how municipalities will plan to be able to finance and approve the right suite of housing for their municipalities. So we can't yet track it because we don't yet know what it is.

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

MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Remember our question? We were on agricultural lands, so if we could do that—but I also wanted to say thank you to Richard Lyall from Rescon for coming in. Thanks for sharing your thoughts.

Back over to our half-started question.

Ms. Lindsay Jones: It's a very significant issue—the issue of agricultural lands and ensuring that, as a province, we are effectively ensuring adequate protection for agricultural lands in a way that protects our food supply and protects these important environmentally sensitive lands, as well. That said, it is also the case that we hear from a number of our members that it is important for developments and residential development to be allowed on certain farming properties, to enable families to be able to have different homes and to be able to continue on with farming. At this point, AMO does not have a position. We're still consulting quite widely with our members, and we plan to put forward an official position as part of the provincial planning statement, just because it is complex. I do think, though, that as we are going forward, we will continue to advocate for frameworks that allow for local decision-making in a way that reflects local circumstances and priorities—and the way that the provincial policy statement is currently worded, it is more restrictive than we might like.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm not sure if you saw the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario

alumni submission. They mentioned that they are unclear as to why site plan control is being removed for smaller-sized developments. They're also unclear as to why watershed-based planning is being significantly compromised by the province, including conservation authority roles. I'm just curious as to some of your thoughts on those.

1540

Ms. Lindsay Jones: AMO has very much voiced concerns with respect to Bill 23 and the significant changes that were made with respect to the role of conservation authorities. It is definitely the case that there is a need for a framework and for capacity across the province to be able to do watershed planning in a way that transcends the political boundaries of municipalities, and we do think that the changes made by Bill 23 severely compromise the province's ability to do that.

We are eagerly awaiting the additional details with respect to the natural heritage portion of the provincial planning statement as well as the promised changes to the section 28 regulation for conservation authorities permitting to truly understand the specific roles that are contemplated for conservation authorities and for municipalities. But to date, our members, particularly smaller, lower-tier municipalities, have voiced significant concerns with the increased responsibilities that are now landing at the municipal level when it comes to some of the decision-making around elements like natural heritage in a way that they are not equipped to do effectively.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right—right on time. Thank you so much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'll go to the final round, to the government side, for seven and a half minutes. MPP Holland, please.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you for your time. Thank you, everybody, for being here with us today. Despite my background, I actually wasn't going to have any questions for AMO, but based on the comments that I heard, I just wanted to touch on the funding formula that was spoken about for my colleagues across the table.

We've found that based on conversations and input from municipalities, service providers at many different events such as AMO, NOMA, ROMA—I know I spoke to this in my 10 years as vice-chair of the Thunder Bay DSSAB and 31 years in my community, that the funding formulas being used were negatively impacting on a majority of our municipalities in the province.

What I've been hearing from a lot of the communities is that the funding formula now is more reflective of the regional circumstances that communities across this province are experiencing based on the different circumstances in those regions.

But I want to just say that I appreciate your feedback regarding Bill 97. This is the most recent housing supply action plan and is the latest in a series of steps our government is taking to increase housing supply and help more Ontarians find a home they can actually afford.

I guess my question for you, Mr. Lyall, is that, as our government knows that labour shortages are limiting home construction, Bill 97 builds upon our government's

previous actions to address skilled trades shortages by proposing actions to address the shortage of building inspectors. Specific to the residential construction sector, what needs to happen to further address labour shortages across the sector?

Mr. Richard Lyall: That's a good question. We still have a long way to go with respect to the skilled trades shortage issue. We've only recently made certain changes with respect to—I would call it fixing the immigration system, where we weren't bringing in enough people with the requisite skilled trades that are needed, and that are needed to support building our future.

Also, within the public education system, the recently announced earlier start for [*inaudible*]. It's a great move, but of course, it's going to take time for that to be implemented and to bear fruit. I would remind people, on that note, that the average age of an apprentice in Ontario is about 28, whereas in Germany, for example, it's 19. That's because we weren't preparing young people properly for good careers in the skilled trades through public education. So we need to get to them much earlier in life and provide them with the tools and the information and the guidance they can use to go forward, because many young people are missing out on opportunities that they're ideally suited for. There is a lot of work that needs to be done there. We need to focus on how the world of work is changing. We're creating new kinds of work.

For example, even in construction, we're a tech industry now. It's not what some people, I think, think it is. We're incorporating innovative methods every day, new things, and doing it well, but the educational component on that is changing. In fact, in 10 or 20 years, the number one job on a construction site is going to be the equipment technician.

We've got to improve what we're doing there more. We've got to implement the changes that have been made. That's often where we fail is on the implementation; we get lots of great plans, but they don't get implemented properly. So good things happening, but a ways to go.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you. I appreciate that. I'm going to share my time with MPP Smith.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank Mr. Lyall for being here and presenting and everyone for also attending, whether virtual or present.

This question is to—may I call you Richard? Is that appropriate?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Yes.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you, Richard. I appreciate your experience. You've been in the business, you said, 30 years. You commented on the future of our towns and our cities. You touched base on something that's near and dear to my heart: training of our youth and getting them into the skilled trades. I agree with you: It's something that other countries have done, that Europe has explored. We need to do that and we're happy to be able to do that with this government.

We also talked about municipalities failing to meet the timelines, which has been restrictive in getting things built. The housing supply action plan is geared towards further layering a foundation for growth so more homes

can be brought into the system and address this chronic and severe shortage of housing options that you talked about at the beginning of your statement.

Given everything that we've talked about, do you think the proposed creation of a balanced framework—and I'm going to spin this back to rental replacement—that includes measures to streamline construction and also to protect the tenants can help reach our goal of building?

Mr. Richard Lyall: Yes, I do. There's a lot at stake here. We're already well behind the eight ball. We're behind other jurisdictions on digitization and modernization. We've got a process that is overly convoluted and time-consuming, uncertain. There still remains a big lack of accountability and transparency in the processes. Digitization: We're the only G7, G20 country that does not have a building information modelling mandate, for example. We've got a lot of catching up to do.

But balance is important too. We happen to have a particular problem right now where this issue has grown over the decades through, really, bad planning at the end of the day. We simply didn't build enough housing to meet our needs. Now, of course, due to a couple of convergences, including the COVID effect, it's really accelerated the effect of this. So we do need immigration. We have a growing population, but we're not producing the housing we need. The consequences of that are just being felt now. I've never seen numbers, in terms of the incomes required to pay, how much rent is taken as a percentage.

Just recently, Singapore has a big problem in the news the other day. They're worried about housing costs and problems with [*inaudible*]. It's a big issue there. Some 90% of Singaporeans spend 25% or less of their income on housing, and they think they have a problem—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We have a problem; we're out of time. Sorry.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you.

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

That's the end of this round, so thank you very much to the presenters.

TORONTO REGION BOARD OF TRADE
MISS OLUWADARASIMI ABIOLA
DON VALLEY COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move on the next round. We'll just give a second or two. We will be looking for Miss Abiola, the Toronto Region Board of Trade and Don Valley Community Legal Services.

1550

We will, if you don't mind, start with the Toronto Region Board of Trade, if they want to start, and then we'll move to Don Valley Community Legal Services and then to Miss Abiola, who I think is just trying to log on.

Just state your name at the beginning, and you have up to seven minutes for your presentation. Thank you; go ahead.

Ms. Roselle Martino: Hi, good morning—or good afternoon, everyone. You can clearly see I'm not off to a good morning; I'm saying “good morning” and it's the afternoon.

Good afternoon. I'm Roselle Martino, senior vice-president of public policy here at the Toronto Region Board of Trade. Thanks very much for the opportunity to present to this committee today on behalf of our 11,500 members. The Toronto Region Board of Trade really welcomes the opportunity, as I mentioned, to make a deposition today.

Along with the proposed provincial policy statement and last year's Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act of 2022, these changes are intended to address the urgent challenge of building of all types of housing more quickly across Ontario. The challenge is especially acute in the Toronto region, which the board is proud to call Canada's innovation corridor. Home to more than eight million residents and 3.5 million jobs, our region is an economic powerhouse that generates nearly two thirds of Ontario's GDP and a quarter of Canada's GDP.

The lack of enough housing and affordability, however, threatens to undermine our ability to attract and retain talent—I heard some of this in the previous presentations—and makes our region less competitive across North America and globally. The board applauds attempts through Bill 97 to streamline housing approvals, housing approval processes and instances where necessary to require landowners and municipalities to come to an agreement through a provincial facilitator.

The board is also supportive of the judicious use of ministers' zoning orders to facilitate the building of more housing on lands where an official plan does not allow it. The board, however, does have concerns about the absence of the designation of provincially significant employment zones, PSEZs, in the proposed provincial policy statement. The board appreciates that, as part of the implementation, the government intends to seek feedback on how to select PSEZs—or parts of them, anyway—such as the Ontario Food Terminal, for instance, for protection. Our concern remains and stems from the potential proposal to do away with PSEZs before a clear plan, criteria or framework for how they may be protected is developed. That's really our piece. We certainly recognize that there's an intention to do something with some of the PSEZs, but there needs to be a clear plan and criteria for which ones are going to be protected and which ones aren't. We understand that this is largely in part due to the decision to do away with the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. However, we are a business consortium, so from an economic context, this has resulted in a policy vacuum, and, again, in our view, that needs to be urgently addressed.

You will know, obviously, that provincially significant employment zones were a policy overlay on municipally designed employment lands. They were developed, as many in this committee know, as a stopgap measure to prevent ad hoc conversions, except during a municipal comprehensive review. The intention had always been to

refine this policy overlay and make PSEZs permanent, whilst recognizing and fixing the current one-size-fits-all approach, which is problematic. This is why the board has previously stressed the need for growth of various sectors and investment attraction to be factored into the policy considerations.

This can be achieved through a strategic provincial framework for employment lands that can accommodate industry growth and allow that important flexibility and nimbleness for housing as well. Unfortunately, the criteria to resolve such conflicts were never developed, to our knowledge, including those between PSEZs and major transit station areas, around higher-order transit stations where housing is a potential use, among others, such as offices.

So we are here today with a balance that here we are, tilted heavily in favour of one side—housing—to the potential detriment of businesses that may be forced to relocate elsewhere because of conflicts that arise from ad hoc conversions, and even south of the border.

The board strongly recommends that a major policy shift not be undertaken without a detailed inventory or developed criteria for which lands must be protected at all costs and where flexibility can be applied. We do understand that employment lands must have some degree of flexibility to accommodate the changing nature of the employment industry. We completely understand that. But we also believe it's important to tread—

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

Ms. Roselle Martino: Okay. The last thing I'll say here is, we are calling for a pause on the removal of the PSEZ policy until a more considered criteria and plan can be developed.

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

Ms. Roselle Martino: I thought there was more—that it was seven minutes, but maybe it was shorter.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Six and a half when you just finished there.

Ms. Roselle Martino: My goodness, are you so proud of me? Brevity is not my forte, but I had to do it there.

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

I see Miss Abiola has joined us, so maybe if we could go to you next, if that's okay. Just state your name at the beginning and you have up to seven minutes to present. You go ahead.

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: Thank you. My name is Oluwadarasimi Abiola, and I'm a grade 4 student at St. Jude Catholic School in London, Ontario. Before I start explaining to you why I'm here, I would just like to say thank you for taking the time to answer my questions and to be here today.

Before I read one of the letters I sent to the member of provincial Parliament for London, Ontario, Peggy Sattler, I would just like to explain to you what got my interest in the greenbelt construction plan.

In school, we've been talking about science, healthy living and social studies. In science class, we've been working on soil and types of soil erosion, climate change,

weather, carbon footprint and greenhouse gases. In healthy living, we've been working on local and imported foods and their benefits. We've also been working on processed and non-processed foods, their pros and cons and seasonal foods in London, Ontario. We've also been working on local foods in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence lowlands.

In social studies, we've been working on Ontario itself, Ontario as a province and the three landscape regions in Ontario: the Hudson Bay lowlands, the Canadian Shield and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence lowlands. We've also been working on the natural resources in each landscape region. We've also worked on land uses in Ontario and the positive and negative consequences of land use. We've also worked on protected land, urban sprawl, Ontario greenbelt and First Nation communities.

I'm going to read the letter that I sent to Peggy Sattler, the member of provincial Parliament for London, Ontario:

"Dear Ms. Peggy Sattler:

"This letter is to consult you that the province of Ontario and myself, Oluwadarasimi Abiola, are questioning the Ontario government about their decision on starting construction in the Ontario greenbelt. We all appreciate what the government has done for the province, but the solution to housing is not building on the greenbelt.

"Some questions that I have are:

"—Does the Ontario government know that they will not ruin that piece of protected land?

"—Can the Ontario government stop the greenbelt construction and find another piece of land?"

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"—There is a piece of land excluding the greenbelt around greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) that can contain over two million houses and buildings but why do they choose to build houses in a more important piece of land?

"—Why is the Ontario government harming the natural resources of the province?

"—Why didn't the Ontario government ask what the citizens of Ontario wanted before allowing developers to buy the land? Because obviously no one wants protected land demolished.

"We thank you and the other members of provincial Parliament for the hard work you put in every day," but the solution you have seen is not going to come from building on the greenbelt. "I please request that some or all of these questions are answered.

"Have a great day.

"Sincerely,

"Oluwadarasimi Abiola"

You don't need to answer some of the questions that were in the letter, or any of them, but I please request that some of these questions that I will be asking now are answered.

When you allow for development of the greenbelt, is there going to be enough land left over for production of food? Are the houses you're allowing to be built on the greenbelt affordable for everyone? Why did you take away the authority of the Greenbelt Council to be able to share confidential news about the greenbelt with the people of Ontario?

Before the last provincial election, Premier Ford said he would not open up the greenbelt for construction. Why did he change his mind after the election?

Thank you for taking this time out of your day to be here with me for me to explain all my interests to the provincial Parliament.

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

We're going to go to Don Valley Community Legal Services for their presentation for up to seven minutes. Just before, state your name, and please proceed.

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Good afternoon. My name is Bhavin Bilimoria, and I'm the director of legal services at Don Valley Community Legal Services, which is a community legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario and located in Toronto.

Similar to our colleague from the Niagara Community Legal Clinic, our clinic provides legal advice and representation to low-income tenants at the Landlord and Tenant Board on matters pertaining to their tenancy. Since 2021, our legal clinic has seen a 30% increase in the number of tenants seeking our legal services because their landlord reportedly wants to either demolish or undertake significant repairs or renovations to the residential complex or the rental units they are in. This increase correlates to the sweeping gentrification we have seen in our clinic's catchment area, including and in particular East York, as well as two major transit projects that will ultimately run through densely populated rental communities within our catchment, specifically Pape and Cosburn, Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park.

Renovictions, and now demovictions, are a growing concern for the communities we serve. The tenants in our catchment area are fearful of their landlords' abusing the subset of what we colloquially refer to as "no-fault evictions" as a way to capitalize on the absence of vacancy control measures in our dear province. It is within this context we respectfully recommend schedule 7 of Bill 97 be amended as follows, to better protect tenants from nefarious attempts to renovict or demovict them from their homes.

I'm hoping to turn it over to Karly Wilson, who's also from our clinic and is a co-presenter.

Ms. Karly Wilson: Thank you very much. Yes, my name is Karly Wilson. I'm a staff lawyer on the housing team at Don Valley Community Legal Services. I'd like to say that we applaud the bill's addition of section 53(2.2) to the Residential Tenancies Act. Requiring landlords to provide 60 days' notice to a tenant that their unit is ready for them to return takes a practical step to preserve the rights of tenants. We do note, however, that there is a disconnect in the language of subsection 2.2 that creates ambiguity and could lead to misuse or misinterpretation of its intentions.

The proposed subsection 53(2.2) states, "The landlord shall give the tenant at least 60 days after the day the rental unit is ready for occupancy to exercise the right of first refusal." We recommend changing this language to state that the landlord shall give the tenant at least 60 days after

the day the tenant is notified that the unit is ready for occupancy. This would also tie this provision to the requirement under section 53(2.1)(3), which states that tenants must receive written notice.

Bhavin?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Our next recommendation is to require landlords giving a notice of termination under section 50 of the Residential Tenancies Act to include a copy of the building permit they ultimately need in order to undertake the demolition or repair work with their form N13 notice. If a landlord fails to do so, then the N13 notice should be rendered void.

In our experience, a tenant is less likely to dispute their landlord's application for eviction at the LTB based on an N13 if the landlord includes the required building permit with their notice. Why? Because it satisfies most tenants' doubts about the genuine intention of their landlord to actually undertake the stated work, and because it is also a good indicator of whether the landlord's application will be granted at the LTB. What does this mean in the long run? It means less hearings, further backlog at the LTB, at a time when the Ombudsman's office has described the board as moribund due to its existing delays. This one simple requirement would not ask a landlord who is acting in good faith to do anything more than what they already have to do. They need a building permit in order to lawfully demolish or significantly repair the residential complex or rental unit therein, and they will ultimately need to produce the building permit as evidence at an LTB hearing in order to approve the merits of their application. It is therefore no imposition on a landlord who is acting in good faith to require them to include the building permit with their N13 notice at the outset of the eviction process. This can be done by adding a new subsection under section 50 of the Residential Tenancies Act which would complement the new subsection (3) proposed in section 2, schedule 7, of Bill 97.

Karly?

Ms. Karly Wilson: A law is only as good as its enforcement. Despite positive changes in this bill, including increases in fines for landlords, it's unlikely, frankly, that there will be substantive changes to landlord behaviour. We suggest necessitating that change, again, through the use of permits. The province has control over the building code through the Building Code Act, with inspectors controlling the permitting of building post-renovation. Why not require that building permit applications note whether a building was tenanted, and if so, require the owner to provide proof if they have given the previous tenant 60 days' notice of their notice to return to the unit, as a condition of receiving an occupancy permit? The inspectors are already coming to the building. The paperwork is already being filed. An additional checkbox requiring landlords to be accountable is not an unreasonable ask, and it would allow the province to put its paperwork where its mouth is.

The Residential Tenancies Act also currently places too high of a burden on tenants to enforce their own rights and to prosecute landlords that break the law. It requires a

tenant who has recently been removed from their home and likely been displaced from their community to seemingly stake out their former unit, file an application against their landlord and engage in what has turned into years of litigation, all for very minimal remedies.

If the province wants to change landlord behaviour, we ask that they invest in enforcement of the act to remove the burden from tenants. The good news is that this enforcement branch is already in place; it just needs more attention and, yes, likely more funding to be effective. Investing in the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit such that it is an effective body would benefit tenants. It's easy to envision a world where this process is as simple as calling a bylaw officer or police officer. A tenant can call the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit to make a report, an officer does an investigation, and if there's a violation they issue a fine. Funding the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit so that it can be proactive and investigative would also help the province. These fines do not go to these tenants; they go to the provincial government. Surely that should be an incentive to track down those violating the rules.

Bhavin?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: On behalf of Don Valley Community Legal Services, we thank the committee for this opportunity to present our recommendations on how to better protect tenants. Subject to any questions the committee has for us, this concludes our presentation.

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

We'll now move to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes of questioning. MPP Bell will begin.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have questions for all three presenters.

My first question is to Roselle Martino from the Toronto Region Board of Trade. I noticed that you brought up a part of the bill that I also have questions about. That part of the bill is around land agreements and giving the minister, through a facilitator, the power to require a landowner to sign an agreement with the ministry or a municipality on what can happen on their land and whether or not they pay costs. When I read this, I'm honestly confused about what this means. In layperson's terms, what do you think that this schedule will mean once it's implemented?

Ms. Roselle Martino: It's a fair question. Our understanding is that it is meant to be reducing burden and red tape. To your point, though, I think what we need to see is how that will actually happen. It's one thing to say the words, but what are the levers and the actions that are going to be taken to actually make that so? The how is still not clear to me.

1610

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that. I am genuinely confused about what agreements a landowner would sign, what does it mean if things happen on their land and what costs they would be required to pay. I'm honestly genuinely confused, but thank you for that.

My second question is to Bhavin and Karly from Don Valley Community Legal Services. Thank you so much

for coming in and your work. I am similarly concerned about Bill 97's failure to address the lack of enforcement when it comes to illegal evictions, and I'm intrigued by the proposals that you've made, especially tying it to building permits and building occupancy. That sounds very interesting.

From your experience as lawyers, how often do you see a tenant who has been illegally evicted return to their unit? And how often do you see landlords who have illegally evicted receive a fine with the current framework that we have?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: In my experience, I have never actually seen a tenant be offered a right of first refusal. Due to backlogs at the Landlord and Tenant Board currently, the T5 applications I have for bad faith to go after a landlord who has wrongfully evicted a tenant on one of those N13 or N12—colloquially, the no-fault evictions, renovations, demovictions, landlord-own-use applications—are still awaiting hearing dates, unfortunately, at the Landlord and Tenant Board. So I have not even had an opportunity yet on behalf of those tenants to seek a fine for their bad behaviour, assuming we can prove, of course, that they did act in bad faith.

Karly, would you like to add anything?

Ms. Karly Wilson: I'll echo what Bhavin said, which is that I have not seen tenants successfully get back into their unit in my time at the clinic.

Speaking also to what Bhavin was mentioning about backlog, I do have tenants who have been waiting over a year and a half, almost two years, for an N13 renovation application to be heard. If they thought they could get back into the unit, they probably would have left in accordance when they first received the notice. But they have no expectation that they'd be able to get back in and therefore have not left.

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Just coming back to one of our recommendations, this is why we're saying, if it could be made a requirement upfront on a demolition or a renovation that the landlord actually include those permits, which they need to obtain anyway if they're genuinely, in good faith, going to carry out this work—if that's given to a tenant upfront, they can make a better-informed decision. If they seek legal counsel, certainly from our legal clinic, upon our scrutiny of those permits, if it looks warranted, we're not going to waste the board's time. This is an opportunity for the parties to come together, agree on a mutually beneficial termination date and not create a further backlog at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that. I am also, quite frankly, astonished that the government is moving forward with a proposal to address illegal evictions when it doesn't address the massive loophole we see where the current framework doesn't work. It simply doesn't work. I have noticed that measures to tie building permits with the renovation process have led to a reduction in illegal evictions in other municipalities. It is likely that we will be introducing amendments similar to what you're proposing to really double down on the eviction protection laws that we've seen work elsewhere in a better way.

My final question is to Oluwadarasimi Abiola. Thank you so much for coming in and speaking today. I think this is the first time I have had an individual under 16 come and speak to committee. It's extremely important that you are doing so, because the decisions we make here affect young people the most.

I was wanting to ask you: When you prepared your letter, when you learned about these issues in the classroom, describe to me the conversations that you had with your friends. Do they have similar concerns like you around farmland and the greenbelt? Help me understand that.

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: In class, when we were talking about it, I think really everyone had a say. They thought that it wasn't the best thing for the province of Ontario. We all just tried to put our ideas into the same place to write themes out. Everyone had a really good idea and a really good understanding of basically what's happening, what isn't meant to happen and what is meant to happen.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much. It's important. I look forward to seeing you at future presentations. I read your letter, and I appreciate that you submitted it.

I want to go back to Don Valley Community Legal Services. You gave some very wise suggestions on how to address illegal eviction. I'm curious about what your position is, or if you have a position, around Bill 97's move—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Just a 30-second warning.

Ms. Jessica Bell: —to the rental replacement bylaw that Toronto has.

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: I'm sorry; I missed the question. I don't know, Karly, if you caught it.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Do you have a position on the changes to the rental replacement bylaws?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Not a formalized one at this moment, at least not on my end.

Karly, do you have thoughts on that?

Ms. Karly Wilson: No.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Five seconds.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you so much for your time. You're welcome to—if you haven't given a written submission already, please do, and I'll make sure to read it.

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Thank you, Ms. Bell.

Moving to Ms. McMahon, you've got five minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Four and a half.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh, too bad. Shoot.

My question is for Toronto Region Board of Trade, Roselle, first. There you are. Just complimenting your art in the background, by the way—very nice.

Ms. Roselle Martino: Oh, thank you so much. It's really lovely, huh?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes. We're going to have to get the artist later on.

Thank you to everyone for your presentations and for taking the time out of your day to come to meet with us virtually.

So I'm just wondering if you think the government, with this bill and their previous Bills 23, 39 etc., etc., are they—you're supportive of housing. We're all supportive of the 1.5 million homes—in how many years; 10 years?—we all want that. So do you think they're being brave and bold enough with these bills, with these ideas and proposals, or do you think they should go further, like four units per lot, up-zoning the main streets, the avenues, the arterial roads, shaking up that yellowbelt?

Ms. Roselle Martino: Yes, I think—let me answer the question. A couple of things: Yes, I think we would obviously look for more boldness, because our situation is quite dire, in terms of our ability to attract and retain people. We're losing young families, and they're never coming back to our region, as an example, and that's a huge economic consequence that we can't ignore.

I would say a couple of things. Number one, we completely support housing, as I've said, but not at the detrimental cost of industry. So you kind of have to look at both sides of the coin. That's one really important point from us at the board.

I think the other point is looking at the types of homes. So for example, we know that there seems to be an emphasis on apartment buildings, and not that that's not important, but we know the real shortage, the real gap, is with family-sized homes.

So to answer your question, could they be bolder? Sure, I would say that, but be bolder in the right areas as well. You can't boil the ocean; we understand that, but be bold where the true gaps are, fill those.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So co-ops, townhouses, four units per lot, what do you think of that?

Ms. Roselle Martino: I guess what I would say is I'm not opposed to it; I think that we have to look at all the permutations and combinations and look at where the greatest gaps are. So, four units per lot? Sure, that may work. I think it depends on the municipality and where in the province that's happening.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Great.

Ms. Roselle Martino: Somebody is playing music; is that me playing music? Sorry, I see a little cue saying, "Play music," so I'm sorry if—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That's okay. I've got to go, because I only have a minute, but thanks. That's great.

And I want to ask Miss Abiola—thank you so much. You have great art on your background, too, on your walls. Thank you for being courageous enough to come here to speak to us. Again, I'm curious as to how you got to be speaking about the greenbelt in your class and with your classmates, and if any other schools that you know of are speaking of that.

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: I don't know of any other schools except my school speaking of the greenbelt

or land use, but I know that at our school, in my class particularly, we all took it seriously. We wanted the best thing for the province.

1620

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you so much. Keep it up. We'll see you here as MPP one day maybe.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Hear, hear. Are you good?

Over to the government. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Seven and a half.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Seven and a half minutes; that's what I meant. The government has seven and a half minutes. The Chair recognizes Mr. Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Good afternoon, everyone. I have a question for Miss Abiola. Nice to meet you here. I appreciate you, at your age—when I was your age, I didn't know a thing. It's great that at your young age, you start being concerned with the real world and asking very important questions.

I'm a first-generation immigrant. I come from a city with a lot of high-rises. If I want to look at the sky, I have to go like that. Now I can look horizontally to look at the sky. It is a great privilege that I can be a Canadian. Therefore, I like green areas. You talked about the greenbelt earlier. I can still remember that when I came to Canada, the first I did was to look for a place to stay. The first room that I rented was in a basement, and my landlord didn't tell me that his room does not have a night light. You know what is a night light, right?

Ms. Oluwadarasimi Abiola: Yes.

Mr. Billy Pang: My city has an issue of light pollution, so we don't need night lights at all. So I didn't have that information, and I found that when the sun sets, if I stretch out my hand, I cannot see my fingers. I felt that, "Oh, my goodness, I was buried alive." That was my first experience in Canada.

As an MPP, I have also a lot of concern and care about tenants and their well-being. Therefore, this Bill 97 is to provide more homes and to work between the landlords and the tenants.

When you are speaking, you have concerns about the greenbelt. I don't know whether you have studied that there are some criteria that our government makes some changes to the greenbelt. Are you aware of that?

Ms. Oluwadarasimi Abiola: No.

Mr. Billy Pang: Okay. Please allow me to read it to you.

"These proposed changes to the greenbelt meet the following criteria, all of which must be met before a property is given consideration." That means there are at least five of them.

"—Greater than 1:1 offset must be achieved to ensure overall greenbelt expansion." That means if the greenbelt is taken away from here one acre, we have to add another acre, at least one to one. We are not removing the greenbelt; we are moving the greenbelt. That's very different. That's number one.

"—Affected areas must have the potential for homes to built in the near future." That means that it is not a greenbelt piece of land from nowhere. It has to be an area where a potential home could be built.

"—Affected areas must be adjacent to the existing greenbelt boundaries." That means you are not building in the middle of the greenbelt. It has to be at the boundary.

"—Affected areas must be adjacent to an existing urban area." That means they're next to each other. This area is developed, this area is developed, this area is developed. This can be a greenbelt in the middle of the developed area. So this is going to be moved, not removed.

"—Affected areas must be on or near readily serviceable land, with local infrastructure upgrades needed to service the projects to be funded entirely by the proponents." That means when you move the greenbelt from one area to the other, this one—the infrastructure is almost there, so it is way cheaper, or a lower cost, to develop that piece of greenbelt. I'm aware that people may have different opinions on that, but at least we need to know what is really there when we're saying we are supporting it or we are not supporting it.

You may be aware that we have a goal of building 1.5 million homes. It's not because our government aims high, so we want to build 1.5 million homes; it's because the population is growing. We need to provide more places called home for them—just like when I come here, I need a place to stay. That's why Bill 97 is to help those tenants and landlords—they are being protected from bad developers or bad landlords. This is what the bill is about.

Do you think it's important to have enough homes for everyone?

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: I do think it's important for everyone to have a home, but I said this in the letter I read when we first came here—that there are pieces of land that are not in the greenbelt that you can still build on. I did my research and I found out that in the greater Golden Horseshoe around Toronto, there's a piece of land that can contain up to two million houses and buildings.

Mr. Billy Pang: I agree with you that if we have enough land—Ontario is a very big province.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: In the future, we can have more discussion. But, say, for example, if you are an owner of a piece of land that you think, "Maybe I want to develop later," will you develop now? Probably not. If you have a piece of land in an area that you are not allowed to develop, but now I'll let you develop, are you going to develop? From my perspective, we need to consider that.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Now we'll move on to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. It's the final round for them. MPP Harden.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank all the folks for deputing this afternoon.

I want to begin with Miss Abiola. What I want to do in our conversation this afternoon is to treat you like a colleague—because this is what you've done for our conversation this afternoon. It was a terrific presentation.

I think what I just heard from MPP Pang was agreement, which is great. If there is agreement with what you just said in your assertion that there's room for that amount of housing without encroaching upon the greenbelt—and you have a member of the government agree with you, and just so you know, all of our conversations here are written in the Hansard, so we have on the record that MPP Pang, as I understood him, agreed with you that we do not have to encroach upon greenbelt lands, which is evidence that this committee has heard before—then that's a major breakthrough, because what it requires from the government—because the government rarely comes here with loose ends; they come here as a unified force. So if what I'm hearing from the government this afternoon in reaction to your deputation is that we do not need to build on the greenbelt because we have ample amounts of room in the greater Golden Horseshoe, as you said, and in—I'm from Ottawa—urban centres, that's a big breakthrough. Thank you for helping us get that breakthrough.

I want to take a stab at answering two questions that you posed. I want to do my due diligence in answering the questions that you posed.

Your first question was, why is the Premier proposing building into the greenbelt when he had previously said that was something he wouldn't do? What I heard MPP Pang say in his response to you was that there would be a 1:1 ratio of any parcel of land used inside the greenbelt—that the greenbelt would somehow mysteriously grow.

What I would ask you, because you've done your research, is, does it make sense to you that if there's a creek or an endangered ecosystem protected by the greenbelt—to trade that off for some other piece elsewhere? Isn't the purpose of the greenbelt to protect that environmentally sensitive area? What do you think about that?

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: I think you're right, because if there is a place that the greenbelt is protecting, why do they want to exchange that land? Because the ecosystem that the greenbelt was protecting can't be protected anymore.

1630

Mr. Joel Harden: You don't protect land by finding other land in need of protection. One understands environmental protection in the province of Ontario and protecting all environmentally sensitive land because, as I'm sure your research showed you, and it showed me, this is the land that irrigates our water systems, it's the land that keeps the arable land that grows our food.

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: Yes.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you for clarifying that. I will leave it to the government members in the next round to say why the Premier backtracked on that promise, and I will leave it to them to answer why this will build affordable housing. Because in my city, I can tell you, none of the building outside the downtown core is affordable housing. It's all geared to as much money as a developer can make. I can honestly tell you, from our perspective, the private market is failing, failing to build affordable housing, and we are fighting like heck to protect the affordable housing that we have.

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: Yes, that is really unfortunate, that we have that right now.

Mr. Joel Harden: Well, look, you're helping us make inroads on that today, and, colleague to colleague, I want to thank you for being here to do that.

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: You're welcome.

Mr. Joel Harden: How much time do I have left, Chair?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Four minutes.

Mr. Joel Harden: All right.

I want to switch to the conversation with Don Valley Community Legal Services, because I think this is really important to, once again, get on the record. I am unfamiliar with any situation in Ottawa where a tenant, having been compelled to move out and contesting that LTB process, has ever been able to get back in, or of a bad faith eviction ever resulting in favour of the tenant.

There's a case—just so you know, for your records; it's in another city, I understand—before the Landlord and Tenant Board right now with a tenant whose name is Melissa Nigi, who is doing precisely this.

But again, for the record: Why do you think it is difficult for tenants to get due process in a situation where there is a bad faith eviction? Do you think this is simply a matter of resources and some people with the resources being able to wait out this tribunal process?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: From what we've seen so far, first and foremost, landlord applications for eviction have been scheduled first, so there's a delay in the scheduling of tenant applications. That was confirmed in the Ombudsman's report.

The other issue, as my colleague Karly alluded to earlier, is you're asking tenants to basically be the enforcer in all of this, instead of tasking the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit with that job. These tenants have been evicted from their home, they've been displaced from their communities, they've moved on with their lives. They're not keeping track of what's happening at their old apartment—staking it out, as we said—to find out who actually moved in and was the work actually done. If they have done that and they've filed their application, so far they're still waiting for a hearing. There have been some hearings that have gone forward, and tenants have gotten some fines, so there have been some instances on own-use applications, but for the renovations and the demovictions that we've seen at our clinic more recently, they are still pending outcomes at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

One of the other difficulties is, if a landlord moves in somebody new, the board has so far said that they do not have the power to order that landlord to reinstate a tenant into a unit that has been reoccupied by somebody new. There is some case law developing at the divisional court that may ultimately change this, and I think our colleagues at ACTO—the Advocacy Centre for the Tenants of Ontario—are working toward pursuing that more, but that is, from my perspective so far, what we've seen. The right of first refusal hasn't actually been utilized as much as it could be. Requiring 60 days may help with that, but it hasn't been utilized so far, to my knowledge.

Karly?

Ms. Karly Wilson: I think the only thing that I would add to that is that there is clearly, from what we've seen in decisions—and there aren't that many of them, but what we have seen is a hesitancy to use the maximum fines that the provincial government is providing. I heard in the earlier presentations, my friends from Niagara, my friends from ACTO, talking about why fines aren't an effective deterrent, and it's because the board isn't issuing them. Nobody is. I like the idea of doubling them, but that doesn't mean anything unless they're actually issued and collected on.

Mr. Joel Harden: Okay.

Chair, how much time?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Fifty-three seconds.

Mr. Joel Harden: Fifty-three seconds? Let's make the most of it.

Is our friend from the board of trade still here? Perhaps not.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I can't answer that question.

Mr. Joel Harden: Then I will bring this back to you, Miss Abiola. This is your—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes.

Mr. Joel Harden: Oh. You know what? I will just bring it back to Miss Abiola, if that's okay, but thank you for making the effort, from the board of trade.

I want you to have the last 40 seconds of this time to talk about anything that has occurred to you as you have heard this debate this afternoon. Thank you once again for being here. Over to you.

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: Thank you. I just feel like if there's anything the provincial Parliament can do right now, it's to make sure that they try to persuade the government into doing the right thing, because right now, Ontario doesn't need anything that's going to ruin our economy. Yes, we need houses—

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

I'm going to go to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: This next round of questioning is for Don Valley Community Legal Services. Thank you for all you do. You should be Order of Canada recipients. We really appreciate it.

The good news about this bill is about the air conditioners—we need that vitally, as you know, with extreme heat being a big concern for the future and for now. But do you think that installation should be on the backs of the renters, or do you think that's something that possibly should be covered by the landlord since it is their property?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: In fairness, I think it will depend on the terms of their original lease agreement. It's a contract between two parties, and it's whatever the parties have agreed to.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What about the fines that are proposed? What we've heard today repeatedly from renters, and prior to today from people contacting our office, is about the enforcement or lack thereof—no real

tracking system for who has been fined; if they have been fined, how much they have been fined and if they have paid; if it has been effective or not. What do you think of a tracking system? In your wildest dreams, what would you propose?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Karly, I'll defer to you on this one.

Ms. Karly Wilson: I think a tracking system would be spectacular, if only to give tenants who call us hope. One thing that we struggle with right now is when tenants call in saying, "How do I deal with this landlord who has done this thing to me?", and you advise that they can file an application at the Landlord and Tenant Board to enforce their rights, and then you tell them that application is going to take about a year to a year and a half and they're not going to see a whole lot from it because there are limitations on what they can ask for and their landlord might not see any negative consequences—and even if they do get an order against them, what are the odds they're going to pay it? I would love to have a better answer than that when tenants are asking what they can do in these circumstances. If I had a list of the times that fines had actually been issued, (a) that might actually deter the landlord, and (b) it would give my tenants hope when they call in; I can say, "We've done it successfully X number of times."

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: I would just add, (c) it would also mean that if a tenant is brought before the Landlord and Tenant Board by a landlord who has an outstanding fine owing to the board, it could be grounds to have that application halted or dismissed until such time as they actually pay the fine that they owe to the government.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm not sure if you've seen the other submissions, but from the city of Toronto—if you've seen their submission, with regard especially to renters, they're very concerned about maintaining the supply of over 276,000 existing rental housing units in Toronto. You haven't seen the submission?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: I have not. As I understand, that was probably what the earlier question was alluding to—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I only have a minute left, so I'll just encourage you to read that and maybe get back to me later about that.

In the last minute, is there one final thought for all of us that you could share as we consider this bill, from your point of view?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Karly?

Ms. Karly Wilson: I would say that the bill took a good step forward in addressing gaps that we had noted previously. Our clinic had spoken to it during hearings about Bill 184. I will also say that in our opinion, it's not going to fix the housing crisis and it's not going to fix the mass evictions we see every day. That needs to be handled by reintroducing rent control or considering vacancy decontrol; otherwise, there is a target on the backs of tenants who did nothing wrong and who have been in their housing for several years.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. I especially like the way that the two of you work so collaboratively together with your deputation back and forth. It's great, impressive.

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

We'll move on to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to first staff off by thanking the presenters for taking time out of their busy schedules today to come in to give some input on our new legislative changes to help protect tenants. My beginning is going to be with the Don Valley Community Legal Services. Based on what I've been able to hear and understand of your work helping people and making sure tenants know their rights, you guys have a first-hand knowledge of all of the challenges that the tenants have had to face under the current legislation.

Based on our changes, what we're working on is helping homebuyers, protecting the tenants, and our plan contains a suite of new actions to make life easier for renters by strengthening tenant rights and protections. These actions are designed to respond to emerging concerns, just like some of the concerns that you've shown of previous cases that you've dealt with about bad-faith evictions and tenant access, especially when it pertains to air conditioning, because especially in the hot summers, I believe it's extremely unfair to have somebody stuck inside a rental unit like that, especially with no proper air circulation.

When we take a look at Bill 97, based on your knowledge of previous tenant expectations versus what you think this bill would do, do you anticipate that tenants will benefit from the proposed changes under Bill 97 to create new tenant protections against evictions due to renovations and the landlord's own use? How do you think this new bill is going to come into effect and benefit tenants?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Thank you for the question. Focusing first specifically on the measures dealing with renovations and demovictions, we did note we think requiring the 60 days' notice for the right of first refusal is a good step forward. It's something that we had previously asked the government when we were giving a deputation on Bill 184. At the same time, we haven't really ever seen that utilized because, as we've noted, tenants unfortunately move on from their units, which is why I think our other request of having a new subsection added to section 50 about requiring permits when N13 notices are issued will hopefully deter nefarious landlords from issuing what are, really, wrongful N13 notices of termination.

Karly, I'm sure you will chime in with the enforcement piece.

Ms. Karly Wilson: Yes. I think if you're asking for an overall take on what the bill is doing for tenants and how it meets expectations, I immediately thought of an analogy which is that the bill feels kind of like that news craze a few years ago where you could have a glass of red wine for the antioxidants. It feels good and it seems nice and it

does technically have benefits, but is it the most you could do for your overall health? Probably not.

This bill does have small things that are helpful. I think there are some major gaps in it like what I've said about enforcement previously and how there isn't really an effective arm doing that. Nor do I think that the provisions added in the bill are going to address the overarching concern. I heard my friend from ACTO refer to them being a lot of Band-Aids, and I would agree with that statement.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'd like to thank you for that comment. When we take a look at some of the previous cases you guys have dealt with in terms of renovations and tenants being able to move back into their homes, this 60-day period—let's say it came into effect last year. How many of those cases that you've had challenges with would have benefited positively with these new changes that we're now proposing? Not as a percentage or an exact number, just as a round figure, do you think the majority of the people who are battling renovations—do you think it would have positively affected their ability to get back into the home?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: It would depend on where they were in their life. Like I said, once you evict somebody, you've displaced them from their community. If they've managed to find similarly priced housing in the same neighbourhood, perhaps. But more often than not, these are long-term tenants who often get picked off for renovations and demovictions who have benefited from rent control and have had to completely move not just out of their community but probably out of the city. We're in Toronto; they probably had to move well out of Toronto to find affordable housing. Assuming the landlord can track them down after that, it's unlikely that they would have.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'm not talking about or discrediting any of the changes you wish to propose or the suggestions you have regarding the bill; I'd just like to keep the focus on the material at hand. When it comes to these particular changes that we've inserted as of now, the ultimate goal is to give the tenant more protections when it comes to these challenges that they may face during their time of that tenancy. With these new changes that we've now proposed, do you think it will ultimately positively benefit the renter or the tenant?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: I would say they don't get at the heart of the problem for the reasons my colleague said. They're Band-Aids. Does the Band-Aid heal the wound? Not necessarily. Not unless you put some antiseptic on that wound.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Well, I do want to talk to the positive benefits of the changes that have been described in this particular bill. I mean, if I were to be a tenant and if I were given the opportunity of a 60-day notice to move back into that rental property, giving me the opportunity to then have the time period to leave my existing place where I am and go back to the community where I was and then go back to a rent that is relatively the same as the rent that I previously was paying, I feel like that would be a benefit to me as a tenant. So I don't want

to have your suggestions outweigh what's been presented here in the bill.

In no way are we discrediting your suggestions. We value your feedback. We value the time that you're taking here to provide your suggestions and that valuable time that you're taking away from your practice to come here and give us suggestions. We value all of that. But we also want to focus on the benefits that this provides tenants. You keep calling this a Band-Aid, but I call it a win for tenants—and not only our government: Tenants call it a win for tenants when we speak to people and you tell them these rules.

Sure, every single time something is proposed, we can always do more, but the fact is, when we come to support our tenants, these are some of the critical things that we've heard from tenants directly when they're dealing with these types of issues. Even when it comes to something as simple as the air conditioning: Do you think that will positively benefit those tenants that don't have the ability right now to install air conditioning?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: The focus of our submissions was on renovations and demovictions, and that's what I would rather keep the focus on. I know my colleague from Niagara spoke earlier about that, so I'd defer to my colleague's submissions on that point. I'll stick to what we said with respect to renovations and demovictions, which is that additional measures are needed at the outset. They need to include the permit with the notice and enforcement mechanisms.

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: But in general, yes or no, do you think that allowing tenants to be able to install their own air conditioning and having that right, do you think that will positively benefit tenants?

Mr. Bhavin Bilimoria: Yes.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Okay. Amazing.

And then I'd like to use my last—

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: —couple of seconds to just thank Miss Abiola. I know you're a young student, and I just wanted to thank you for taking the time out and for the courage that it takes to prepare yourself to enter something like this. I really think you have a bright future. We would love to see you here as an MPP. I just want to really thank you for all of the interest that you've taken on behalf of your classmates and on behalf of your school to come and join us here today and share your opinions on the subject matter at hand. Thank you so much for joining us.

Miss Oluwadarasimi Abiola: You're welcome. I might not be a Canadian citizen, but I want the best for Canada, I want the best for Ontario. I want the best for London, Ontario. I want the best for everyone. And I think that if some changes are made—

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: The last thing I would want to mention is, we would love to see you as a Canadian citizen.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Hey. Okay, the Chair's got to get this meeting back in order here.

Anyway, thank you to all the presenters. I really appreciate your time and the fun round of questions that we've had. So thank you very much, and I'll let you go—I guess to disconnect; you're all virtual. Thanks, everybody.

MORTGAGE PROFESSIONALS CANADA ONTARIO HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): For the next round, we'll ask the Mortgage Professionals of Canada to come forward and the Ontario Home Builders' Association. Come on up—both in person; no virtual this time.

When you're ready, everyone—the Mortgage Professionals of Canada. Jasmine, whenever you're ready, you can just state your name, and you have up to seven minutes. When you start speaking, we'll begin the count-down.

Ms. Jasmine Toor: Just a moment, sorry.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sure, that's fine.

Ms. Jasmine Toor: I'm just pulling up my notes.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): That's okay. We'll give you time. Whenever you're ready, Jasmine, go ahead.

Ms. Jasmine Toor: My name is Jasmine Toor. I'm the director of public affairs at Mortgage Professionals Canada. We are Canada's mortgage industry association with over 15,000 members, with 9,500 in Ontario alone and over 1,000 member firms nationally. We're a non-profit association representing mortgage brokers and agents as well as banks, lenders, insurers and service providers, making up the largest network across the country. In fact, 45% of first-time homebuyers in Canada choose brokers for their mortgage. We are proud to be the industry that provides Canadians with choice when making the most important financial decision of their lives.

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On behalf of the mortgage industry, we welcome this legislation. The government's plan to protect and support Ontario's homeowners, renters and rental housing providers is a key step towards solving the affordability and housing supply crisis.

Ontario's adoption of a targeted approach to deliver on the plan to build 1.5 million homes by 2031 is the type of bold and ambitious thinking we need to get housing on track in Canada. We commend the work of the government in bringing forward these proposals and supporting homebuyers, landlords and tenants. The measures the government is taking will help to advance the long-term goal of increasing housing supply and greater affordability for Ontarians, and help Ontario to continue to attract investment and talent.

To further the goals of the Ontario government's plan, we also believe that more can be done at the provincial and federal levels to make it easier for homebuyers to afford buying a home. This is particularly a concern for first-time homebuyers. In our latest consumer survey, we saw that

close to 30% of non-homeowners thought that they would never be able to buy a home in the future. This is a disturbing statistic. We believe that the dream of home ownership should be available to all Canadians.

That is why we support a doubling of the land transfer tax rebate for first-time homebuyers from \$4,000 to \$8,000 and indexing it to inflation to keep pace with today's housing prices and to help those entering the market, particularly first-time homebuyers and young families. The average price of real estate in Ontario is \$875,000 today, a growth of over 50% in little over five years from January 2017, when the average price of real estate was \$541,000. The land transfer tax rebate has not seen an increase since that time. For many first-time homebuyers, particularly young families, the land transfer tax is a significant closing cost. The Ontario Real Estate Association estimates that homebuyers are paying \$13,000 on the average Ontario home. This is an out-of-pocket expense which cannot be included within a homebuyer's mortgage. That is why we believe that a doubling of the land transfer tax rebate for first-time homebuyers is a timely solution. It is a policy that would complement the provincial priorities of supporting housing supply growth, and it would also help first-time homebuyers enter the housing market. With interest rates now at the highest levels in more than two decades, Ontarians are facing challenges in the housing market, particularly young people considering whether they will be able to afford a home in the future.

Second, we support the provincial request to the federal government to modernize the HST thresholds for all new housing and to match the provincial portion of the rebate, removing any clawback. We would also support an update to the provincial rebate to modernize the thresholds to housing prices, to give homebuyers a break. As the Housing Affordability Task Force points out, the rebate is based on less than half of today's average home price. Two decades ago, the maximum home price eligible for a rebate was set at \$450,000 federally and \$400,000 provincially, resulting in a maximum rebate of \$6,300 federally and \$24,000 provincially. The average home price in Ontario, as previously mentioned, is \$875,000, and in the GTA, the average home price has reached well over \$1.1 million for all home types and over \$1.4 million for a single-family detached home, well above the current threshold. Homebuyers who are above the current ceiling face a significant clawback. By indexing the rebate to current housing prices, both governments would reduce the cost of housing and the cost of building new homes, as the task force points out. We fully support the implementation of this recommendation.

As pointed out by the Housing Affordability Task Force, housing prices in Ontario have tripled over the last 10 years, growing much faster than incomes. This has homeownership beyond the reach of most first-time homebuyers across the province, even those with well-paying jobs. Ontario has tackled housing supply issues head-on with the housing supply action plan, the More

Homes Built Faster Act and, more recently, the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Final 60 seconds.

Ms. Jasmine Toor: An appropriate next step would be to update tax incentives and rebates for consumers to help them with the affordability challenges that they are currently facing and to bring these incentive programs in line with current housing prices. We believe that these two recommendations support Premier Ford's commitment to take action on the housing crisis, cutting red tape and meeting the needs of Ontario's population growth by building more homes.

Thank you for your time.

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

Now we move to the Ontario Home Builders' Association. Mr. Piccini, go ahead and start when you're ready, please.

Mr. Alex Piccini: Good afternoon, committee members. My name is Alex Piccini, and I'm the manager of government relations for the Ontario Home Builders' Association, better known as the OHBA. I'm very glad to be with you all here today to speak in favour of Bill 97, the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023. With more than 4,000 member companies, OHBA is the voice of the homebuilding, land development and professional renovation industry across the province of Ontario.

To put residential constructions' impact into perspective, consider that the building and renovation industry provides more than 549,000 good-paying, rewarding careers in the province; pays over \$38 billion in wages annually; and generates \$83 million in direct investment value to Ontario's economy. OHBA is proudly affiliated with our 27 local associations, including the Building Industry and Land Development Association—I understand you heard from Mr. Dave Wilkes earlier today.

Our members construct the vast majority of new housing in the province, which represents approximately half of the housing starts in Ontario in any given year. Our members also renovate the existing housing stock and purpose-built rental across our region.

OHBA has for years been raising awareness around the growing housing supply problem across Ontario, which is a significant contributor to the attainability challenges that we are all experiencing. In 2021, OHBA worked with the Smart Prosperity Institute to better understand the disparities between housing supply and projected family formations in Ontario. The numbers we found were truly staggering: Over 2.2 million more people will call Ontario home by 2031. However, Ontario simply isn't building enough homes fast enough to meet future demand. Since 2021, we have seen demand accelerate even further. By the time the province's Housing Affordability Task Force report was released, we all learned that one and a half million homes were needed in the next decade. In addition, the federal government announced afterwards that it plans to increase immigration targets for Canada to 500,000 people per year by 2025.

Consider that, in 2022, the industry built slightly more than 96,000 new homes. This means we need to increase housing starts by 50% to keep building at that rate for a decade—a monumental challenge. However, not meeting that challenge would have a real and significant negative impact on Ontario's competitiveness, Ontarians' quality of life and economic sustainability. What this means is that meeting the goal of one-and-a-half million homes over the next 10 years is an enormous challenge that requires bold change and innovative thinking. It requires significantly increasing the pace and volume of home construction across Ontario in communities big and small.

With that housing need crystal clear, the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act is therefore welcome news for industry and for new homebuyers. Incentivizing the construction of purpose-built rental housing is vital to improving options for more Ontarians, and community builders across our province are glad to see our provincial government is taking these small steps to make more housing possible in communities, as I mentioned, big and small.

Ontario's housing supply crisis means too many people are unable to find a home that meets their needs and their budget. Addressing this crisis means ensuring more supply is built and is readily available—crucially, again, including that rental housing stock. Therefore, these important updates will help increase the supply of housing units in a rapid fashion.

To sum that up, OHBA supports Bill 97. It will make it faster, easier and more attainable to construct new homes and rental in Ontario. First, Bill 97 gives more certainty to homebuyers, builders and municipalities. New homebuyers in Ontario need and deserve a predictable permitting process that gives confidence that their new home will actually be built. This must be the basis of any and all municipal processes related to residential development. Approval of the timing and delivery of new housing must be the overarching objective as part of changes to the fee refund positions being proposed through Bill 97. OHBA strongly supports changes made through the More Homes for Everyone Act to induce a sense of urgency towards legislated timelines of zoning bylaw and site plan application fees.

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Fee refund measures will ultimately encourage municipalities to make more timely decisions by requiring a gradual return of site plan control and zoning bylaw amendment fees where sufficient time has passed since a municipality has received a complete application and fee. This system is much needed to help expedite the decision-making process, and we hope that, with this new-found clarity on a July 1 deadline for implantation, municipalities will be prepared to expedite decisions and get housing built. This will also help provide greater predictability for municipalities and ultimately homebuyers who are counting on that housing supply.

Second, Bill 97 will help spur the construction of more rental housing across our province. OHBA was very, very encouraged by the provincial government announcing in

the latest budget that conversations with the federal government are under way to take another look at the harmonized sales tax policy, including through exemptions, deferrals or other targeted measures. Taking a second look at taxation policy around new housing is a significant and impactful change that both the provincial and federal orders of government can make which will have an immediate impact on attainability.

We are glad to see the provincial government is calling on Ottawa to defer HST on new large-scale purpose-built rental as well. This will help build more rental housing in a rapid fashion at a time when we need these units to help lower rents. Increasing the speed and affordability of building new housing means more choices for Ontarians who need a place to call home. Without the right mix of home ownership, including rental options, Ontario risks economic damage as talent and businesses will seek out other regions that can provide a better chance at that dream of home ownership.

In conclusion, we have our hands a significant housing crisis that is taking place in communities, big and small, across Ontario. The remedies are grounded in greatly increasing the supply of homes by speeding up the approvals and building new homes and rentals, therefore improving attainability and securing the long-term competitiveness and livability of our province. Bill 97 puts forward more tools and provides real solutions to help us address the housing supply crisis so that more Ontarians can find a place where they can call home.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to present our comments here today, and I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much to the presenters. We'll now go to MPP Bell for the official opposition: seven and a half minutes. Go ahead.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the Jasmine Toor from Mortgage Professionals Canada and Alex Piccini from the Ontario Home Builders' Association for coming in. I appreciate it.

Most of my questions are going to be directed towards you, Alex, because a lot of what you focus on is really related to the bill. I have a few questions. One is that Bill 97 is twinned with changes to the growth plan and the provincial policy statement to create a new proposed planning statement. In that planning statement, the Conservatives are looking at eliminating hard targets for density, not just within municipalities but also within new subdivisions, which I have some concerns about, given our goal is to protect farmland and meet our housing supply targets at the same time. Does your association support the changes to the density requirements?

Mr. Alex Piccini: Thank you very much for the question, MPP Bell. As we all know, Ontario is planning for record levels of growth. As I mentioned in my comments earlier, the federal government is planning for about 500,000 new immigrants to Canada by 2025. The provincial government has indicated that, through changes to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, there is some interest in changing how that relationship ultimately—

who is coming to Ontario, making sure they have the skill set.

To your question: As we're preparing for that growth, the provincial policy statement, and more specifically, the planning rationale for the province has to keep in step with that growth mandate. We want to ensure that there is a comprehensive land-planning-use approach, and so the crucial changes that are being proposed as part of the PPS will certainly help all communities, big and small, especially those who aren't necessarily within the GTA who have experienced tremendous growth over the last number of years, as we've seen, but have not had the right planning tools in place to help manage that.

These are ultimately positive changes that I think we're going to see move ahead, which will benefit new Ontarians, because it will help ensure that we are in a position where municipalities have the resources and the framework to build the housing supply that we need. So I think it's setting up municipalities to succeed in that context.

As we're all aware, the PPS consultation is currently under way—I think it's closing on June 5—and so OHBA will be participating in that exercise in the public consultation period, as well.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The second question I have is about Bill 97's changes to land agreements. I'm going to summarize it in layperson's terms: There is a schedule in this bill that would give the minister the power to require a landowner to sign an agreement with a ministry or a municipality on what can happen on their land and if they have to pay any costs. I am genuinely confused about what this could mean, who it is affecting, what it actually looks like on the ground. If I was a landowner, my first thought would be, "Does that mean that I will be required to develop a property even if I don't want to or pay for service infrastructure even if it doesn't directly benefit me?" What's your take on this part of the legislation? Does the Ontario Home Builders' Association have a position on it? Did you advocate for the changes? I'm curious about what you think.

Mr. Alex Piccini: In terms of new authorities, we have to recognize that we're in a housing supply crisis and a comprehensive approach is what is clearly needed—an all-hands-on-deck approach—from Ontario in order to actually move ahead on our housing supply targets. As you'll hear from builders, having the right tool in the tool box is critical to ensuring that we are actually constructing the homes we need, and that includes having certain flexibilities throughout the planning process—and as part of Bill 97, there's also the understanding to appoint more provincial land facilitators. Obviously, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing needs to be properly resourced to have the capacity to bring new housing online. Certainly, that's something OHBA supports—in having greater capacity to facilitate new housing supply. Where there are bottlenecks at the provincial level, we're open and would support looking at that—a holistic review of where bottlenecks can be eliminated, where they can be mitigated. Those are important aspects to what we need to

be doing in order to actually bring new housing online—and then that also transcends down into the municipality. One of the biggest things that we've seen with Bill 109 was, because of the fee refund provisions, a lot of front-loading of requirements onto existing applications. In many cases, you were having a tremendous amount of work being asked right at the front, even before a pre-consultation happened. That kind of change, that kind of shift in culture at the municipal level is indicative of what we're seeing—to stymie development and to slow things down.

So certain measures within Bill 97 will help get us to a point where we do have a streamlined approach—both the municipal and provincial levels—to identify roadblocks, clear them, so that way we can get more housing built, because ultimately that's the goal. That's what's going to help restore attainability. The Ontario Home Builders' Association is incredibly interested in seeing where there are challenges, where there—where those challenges are identified too. Often, a lot of the challenges that we see in terms of process can be articulated from a provincial or a municipal lens, but at the end of the day, community builders are constructing the housing supply we need and they're the ones working through that process. So what we do at OHBA is, we identify those challenges, bring them to the forefront of our advocacy, articulate the challenges they pose and reduce it down to, at the same time who it is ultimately impacting.

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

Mr. Alex Piccini: When it comes down to it, we're building homes for people and we're building homes for families. That is the ultimate goal. If we're seeing those barriers, we need to be able to address them meaningfully so that people can get homes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you both for your time.

Jasmine, it would be good for me to meet with Mortgage Professionals Canada at another time so I can find out more about what you're advocating for and have some time for questions. I appreciate you coming in today, as well.

Ms. Jasmine Toor: Absolutely. That would be wonderful.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you for coming in, Jasmine and Alex.

My first questions are for Alex and the Ontario Home Builders' Association. Sorry—I was mixed up because I thought Luca was coming in, but I guess I'm looking at an old agenda. So it's Alex Piccini.

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Mr. Alex Piccini: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: —and you're a manager of government relations.

Mr. Alex Piccini: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, great. Thanks. Thank you again for your deputations. I'm just wondering what you think: Do you think the government is going aggressively enough about a building the 1.5 million

homes in the next 10 years, especially considering we're behind already right now? Should we be going further? How much further do you think we can go? I am thinking of zoning avenues, transit corridors. The Danforth, where I live, is two storeys—one storey in spots—on a subway corridor. Main Street is a bit better. It's a mobility hub. It's getting its high-rises and whatnot. But also looking at single-family homes, the governments is talking about three units per lot. It's already happening, three units, basically, with laneway suites and basement apartments. What about four units and, getting creative, co-ops, small brownstones, townhouses? Just being a lot more courageous about the yellow belt and really getting behind the endeavour to build 1.5 million homes: What are your thoughts?

Mr. Alex Piccini: It's a fantastic question. I definitely think there is always appetite for more avenues to explore when it comes to provincial policy and ways that we can increase supply. At OHBA, our focus is on supply, on making sure that we're getting that to market, we're getting that to families and individuals who want a place to call home.

Certainly, the government has done a lot of, I would say, very bold policy so far to get us to a point at which we're seeing progress on things like, as you mentioned, three units as of right—a very significant and courageous change to incentivize a lot of that new typology and build upon existing infill situations. You mentioned in your riding in the Danforth, Line 2, the Green Line, and having more density along that.

Certainly, there is significant appetite within the builder community to ensure that we are bringing forward as much density as possible. We hear that a lot from our membership, where there are better options, where there are more, as you mentioned, creative options when it comes to housing as well. Not every use needs to be as particular as just more units, but rather: How is that space best used? How is that meeting the needs of individuals? The marketplace is the best way to determine that, in terms of what is being required, what the demand is calling for. That's something that we are always looking to see more changes on.

One of the things—

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

Mr. Alex Piccini: Thank you. One of the things that OHBA has long called for is changes, as my colleague Jasmine mentioned, around HST and the way that can unlock new housing, because it brings more people into the market.

On the supply side as well, we're also looking at new typologies. One of the biggest things Bill 97 looks at is preconstruction, prefabrication units, and really unique circumstances in which those kind of changes, those types of smaller homes—prefabs—can be utilized, especially in northern Ontario and rural Ontario, areas where they have a significant amount of applicability and at a cost that makes sense for a lot of people as well.

Certainly, there have been a lot of what we would say bold changes to move policy forward and to get more housing built. There is always hunger for more, and there is always hunger to build upon the changes that have been made.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I will now go to the government side and MPP Rae to start the seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to our presenters for your deputations today. I know all committee members appreciate your comments and your feedback on Bill 97 and our proposals to build more housing. It was great to hear from both of the witnesses that you support our ask that the federal government defer the HST on large purpose-built rentals to get more of that built. I know the province has already done a lot of work on that, and the ball is in the federal government's court. So it's great to have that support as we move forward on that file.

My question is actually for Jasmine. In Bill 97, when Minister Clark tabled it, Minister Rasheed as well was obviously involved in that aspect because we're looking at potentially bringing in new consumer protections related to new home purchases. Two examples that we're looking at are a cooling-off period for new freehold home purchases—so if it's purchased, there's a cooling-off period after that—and then a requirement for all buyers of new homes to receive legal advice as well to make sure they have that, essentially, second opinion, more or less, from a legal representative on their purchases.

I was just wondering what your thoughts and your organization's thoughts were around some of those initiatives.

Ms. Jasmine Toor: Sure. Regarding the cooling-off period, we do have the experience of witnessing that in British Columbia. I have been hearing from many of our members in British Columbia that there is a great deal of confusion still around the rescission period. I would really advise looking at the example in British Columbia, seeing what has worked and what has not worked.

Certainly, from a consumer standpoint, within a purchase agreement they often have a financing clause or other clauses such as an inspection clause. I think that the call for a cooling-off period really started during the pandemic when people were purchasing houses with no conditions. That market will likely not exist in the future, so we've certainly seen moving away from that. I think that there are some consumer protections already in place in terms of, within a purchase agreement, if a consumer cannot get financing, they can walk away from the home purchase. So there are already pre-existing consumer protections in place.

And then—pardon me, your second question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: We're looking at potentially a requirement for buyers of new homes to get legal advice when they—

Ms. Jasmine Toor: From a broker perspective, certainly a broker would often advise their client to do so.

They would require a lawyer anyway if they are closing on the home. Oftentimes, a client would purchase a home and then would consult with their lawyer to have the legal advice upfront. I don't particularly see an issue with that. Perhaps other associations may have a different perspective, but from a mortgage broker perspective, generally, if the client has questions outside of a broker's purview, they would likely consult their client to speak with a lawyer.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you.

How much time do we have left, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have four minutes.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I'll give it to my colleague Vijay.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, Jasmine and Alex, for your deputations. I'll go to Alex for my question. Alex, we all know that the province of Ontario is booming right now. Just in 2022, we got 440 new residents coming to Ontario and calling Ontario their new home. As you mentioned in your deputation, moving forward, half a million immigrants are coming to Canada, and a majority of them want to stay here in Ontario. Of course, our changes in this bill are laying a foundation for more homes to be brought to address the severe home shortage that we are seeing in the province.

How would you look at this bill in terms of increasing of the housing supply and the attainability of new homes moving forward in Ontario?

Mr. Alex Piccini: Absolutely. Thank you very much for the question, MPP Thanigasalam. Obviously, one of the biggest things that Bill 97 does to increase housing supply and support new homebuyers is to look at the changes around—I'm going to say rental. I'm going to focus on that. Obviously, providing more options for rental housing is very much needed. The changes that are proposed through Bill 97 to make it so that rental housing can be constructed faster, having that dialogue with the federal government on taxation policy is a tremendous opportunity to really change the channel and change the narrative around how we get our rental housing supply built. That's absolutely essential. It's a policy that has been long called for by the Ontario Home Builders' Association and something that I think renters across Ontario are looking to see, because if it means that we're getting new housing opportunities built faster and in a shorter period of time at the supply that we need, that's the way to get attainability at the end of the day. That is where need to be going.

And then, furthermore, the dialogue as it relates to—Jasmine mentioned first-time homebuyers as well. There's an opportunity there to build that dialogue and see where targeted approaches can be utilized to help people get into a home that fits their needs and their budget. Really, that's what we're looking at. Taxation policy is a tremendous area that the provincial government—obviously, we're very glad at the Ontario Home Builders' Association that the provincial government is looking at it and strongly support conversations with the federal government to make that happen.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Awesome. Thank you, Alex.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: One minute? Thank you, Madam Chair.

In a recent press release from Ontario Home Builders' Association, I think partnered with other building industry and land development, you talked about the employment lands to residential lands. Could you please speak about the importance of facilitating more housing in certain employment areas while protecting the land that is truly needed for employment land? Because the press release mentioned that Bill 97 has a potential to facilitate this. Could you speak on that?

Mr. Alex Piccini: Sure, yes. Thank you, MPP Thanigasalam. Obviously, protecting employment lands but also incorporating elements of residential is I would say a key opportunity that the province is looking at through Bill 97 in order to actually facilitate means where there can be practical housing solutions in areas that are already designated. As part of the consultation that's under way currently with the provincial policy statement, there are elements in there to ensure as well that—

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

I don't believe there are any more rounds of questions, that we're all okay? Okay. So I want to thank the presenters for coming forward today. Those were good rounds. I would say that this concludes the final business for today.

A reminder that the deadline for filing written submissions to Bill 97 is 7 p.m. on May 11, 2023.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Thursday, May 11, 2023. Thank you, everyone.

The committee adjourned at 1723.

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