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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

HE-33

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-33

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

Regional governance

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

Gouvernance régionale

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Monday 6 November 2023

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43^e législature
Lundi 6 novembre 2023

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Monday 6 November 2023

Lundi 6 novembre 2023

The committee met at 1000 in Traditions Banquet Hall, Barrie.

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good morning, everyone. That wasn't really a resounding sound to start, but anyway. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We're meeting in the city of Barrie to conduct public hearings on the study on regional governance. We are joined by staff from the legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments should go through the Chair.

Any questions before we begin? We're all well versed.

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

Are there any questions?

**TOWN OF BRADFORD WEST
GWILLIMBURY
CITY OF BARRIE
SIMCOE COUNTY GREENBELT
COALITION**

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Seeing none, we will now call on the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, if you would like to come up to the table. You'll have seven minutes for your presentation—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Oh, sorry. Everybody that's here for the first three: city of Barrie and Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition—I guess everybody that's here can come to the table. I'm out of practice here.

Then I'll just ask each presenter, before you begin, to state your name for Hansard's purposes. We'll turn the

mikes on from here, so don't worry about that. You can adjust the microphone, though, however it works for you.

We'll go in the order that the agenda is, which is the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury. I know that the mayor is here. Everybody ready? You can start when you're ready.

Mr. James Leduc: Good morning. My name is James Leduc. I am the mayor of Bradford West Gwillimbury. I am joined today by my deputy mayor, Raj Sandhu; councillors Jonathan Scott and Ben Verkaik; and my CAO, Geoff McKnight. Together, we form our town's working group on regional governance review as our county councillors and alternate county councillors.

I'm here to share today that Bradford West Gwillimbury welcomes this committee's work looking into ways to improve regional governance. I also want to share with you the principles and outcomes we hope this committee will pursue to help improve regional governance here in Simcoe county.

First, some background and context: Bradford West Gwillimbury is the southernmost municipality in Simcoe county, located north of Vaughan and south of Barrie. We are an agricultural community including the Holland Marsh, which is the soup and salad bowl of Canada. Over the past two decades, we've experienced rapid population growth as one of Canada's fastest-growing municipalities.

Today, we number 44,000 people, and we'll grow to 84,000 by 2051. In short, what was once a small agricultural town is now a mid-sized municipality which will only continue to grow. The town straddling the Highway 400 and Yonge Street corridor is located at the midpoint between the city of Barrie and downtown Toronto, and we are seeing significant industrial and commercial growth. Given this rapid growth, we have a lot in common with typical GTA municipalities.

As a town, we are a lower-tier municipality situated in the county of Simcoe, which is comprised of 16 towns and townships. The county has an estimated population of 565,000 people and is the second-largest county based on population and third-largest based on physical size in Ontario.

As an upper-tier municipality, Simcoe county is responsible for a range of municipal services, which include social housing, land ambulance and emergency planning, solid waste management, the county road system, Ontario Works, library co-operative, museums, archives, county forest management, regional tourism, regional transit, and land-use-

policy planning. Bradford West Gwillimbury, like other lower-tier municipalities, is responsible for water, sewer services, local roads, public libraries, recreation services, fire and police services, land-use-development control, licensing and permitting services, local transit, and general administration.

Ontario's counties were originally intended as an upper-tier coordinating body for rural municipalities. While much of Simcoe county's landscape remains rural today, the emergence of large urban centres, including our own Bradford, and significant tourist destinations have drawn rapid growth over the past few decades. With provincial policy directing more growth to our area, this regional review comes at an opportune time to determine whether Simcoe county's governance structure and service area responsibilities are relevant today and into the future.

We would respectfully submit that there are some areas of improvement. Specifically, we request that the standing committee thoroughly assess and seek improvements toward (a) ensuring there is fair, democratic representation for all member municipalities; (b) structure and practice are in a good place that delivers efficient decision-making and good governance; (c) service area responsibilities are clearly defined, outlined and avoid duplicative or overly cumbersome processes; and (d) lower-tier municipalities possess greater autonomy.

We believe that ensuring a governance system based on representation by population is imperative. Instead, right now, each of the county's 16 member municipalities has two representatives, equating to two votes, unless a recorded vote is called for, which triggers a weighted vote system based on population. We feel there are other models that would be fairer and more equitable that should be implemented. Simply, there are some areas of municipal and county services that are duplicative or that could be streamlined to save taxpayers money and more efficiently deliver for our residents.

Following an announcement of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing this summer regarding the inclusion of Simcoe county among those upper-tiers, subject to regional review, our council unanimously passed a motion, including with our written submission. Let me quote a few highlights:

"Whereas Bradford West Gwillimbury has unique needs within Simcoe county due to its nature as the southernmost municipality, the most urbanized, most diverse and one of the largest towns in the county and one of the fastest-growing municipalities in the country; and

"Whereas Simcoe county council consists of each of the 16 member municipalities' mayor and deputy mayor such that Bradford West Gwillimbury, despite being one of the ... largest municipalities, receives only two votes out of 32 total votes on county council; and

"Whereas this lack of 'representation by population' is contrary to long-established Canadian principles of effective representation; and

"Whereas Bradford West Gwillimbury seeks to operate in a manner that best facilitates smart residential growth, economic development and a lean, efficient government; and

"Whereas given the disparate interests and challenges across the county's municipalities, varying growth pressures faced across the area and the provincial imperative to urgently deliver a broader range and supply of housing, the timing of the ... review of Simcoe county's future role, responsibilities and inter-municipal relationships is critical;

"Now therefore, the council of ... Bradford West Gwillimbury hereby" urges the province "to consider how to ensure principles such as fair democratic representation; efficient decision-making and good governance; removal of duplicative or overly cumbersome processes; greater lower-tier autonomy, particularly for south Simcoe municipalities...."

This resolution expresses the town's support for the regional review and lists the key matters that we feel should be addressed for all lower-tier municipalities.

In the undertaking of this review, we request that the committee employ appropriate resources and professional services to assist with examining and expanding upon the work previously completed. We would point you to the 2019 regional review by Ken Seiling and Michael Fenn, as well as service reviews completed by the county in 2022 for such areas as legal services, library services, fire services, and water and waste water services. The town also requests that additional in-person consultation opportunities be provided with lower-tier municipalities, stakeholders and the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation process. There may not be a more impactful exercise currently under way that will have a greater influence on the future of our region. The town of Bradford West Gwillimbury fully supports the province's review of our regional government, and we're confident that it will lead to a stronger future for our community and the broader region.

Thank you very much.

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

We'll now move to the city of Barrie. Please go ahead, Your Worship.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Before I do, we've circulated—I don't see them in front of you—the actual presentations for today. Would you like me to wait until those are—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): It has been circulated electronically, but we do have it in print as well. Does anybody else need a copy?

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I think they want some copies. We'll just hold on—we're not going to take this time off this, Mayor. You'll still get seven minutes.

Everybody good?

Please go ahead.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Thank you, and welcome to Barrie, Madam Chair, as well as members of the committee. I hope that you'll certainly enjoy your time here in our natural environment that we get to call home. We thank you for the honour of this hearing being held here in the city of Barrie.

I have a presentation which, as I've just stated, has been handed out and circulated. Also, you will have a binder of

support letters that have been submitted by stakeholders in the city of Barrie. Those stakeholders include the chamber of commerce and the realty association locally, as well as manufacturers throughout the city of Barrie. Together, these folks represent thousands, if not tens of thousands, of employees in Barrie and the surrounding municipalities.

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You'll also see inside that binder that there are letters of support signed by all living mayors of the city of Barrie—Janice Laking, 1988-2000; Jim Perri, 2000-03; Rob Hamilton, 2003-06, Dave Aspden, 2006-10, and Jeff Lehman, 2010-22—all endorsing and supporting more industrial land supply for the city of Barrie.

Barrie is a single-tier municipality, and through that, we are one of the fastest-growing municipalities in the country. We have robust results that you will be able to see. As a city, our strategic plan focuses on ensuring quality of life, getting housing built, jobs and ensuring there's responsible government. We also, as a single-tier municipality, are able to actually get housing built. We're able to ensure that any red tape is cut, as well as make sure that it's an efficient way that our government structure is run.

While we sit inside of Simcoe county as a geography, we are not part of the county in terms of governance. As a single-tier municipality, that allows us the freedom to be able to move quickly.

If you look at the slide with relation to housing, BILD twice wrote reports stating that the city of Barrie was the overall best municipality across the GTA for getting new housing developments approved. We're on our way to our 23,000 homes that you as the province have allocated to us in our 10-year plan. In 2023, we have 1,850 housing starts—that's basements poured—which exceeds our goal of 1,687 allocated for 2023 by Minister Calandra. We also have approved 4,641 new units to date in 2023. On top of that, we've approved or are currently overseeing CIHAs for 5,211 new units to be built.

On top of that, the city of Barrie will announce in 10 days that we are going to move some of our city-owned properties to market after rezoning them, and that will generate an additional 3,000 new residential units in the city of Barrie, for altogether 12,500 new units in 2023. That represents 23% of the existing doors in the city of Barrie, at just over 51,000. So we take housing seriously, we've been getting it done and we're planning for the future, as requested by the province.

But we have a problem. Our problem is, we don't have any industrial supply. Recently, you'll see, we lost one of our manufacturers to a rural neighbour. Because we don't have any additional supply, we need the city's boundary to move, to bring on land, so that we can have employers expand here in the city of Barrie and we can also attract those major investments that we've seen going to other places around the province.

We're uniquely positioned, with water, waste water and transit services. The four key principles that we've been discussing with our neighbours—and certainly this has matured and morphed over the last 10 months of discussions—are these:

(1) If land is to come into the city of Barrie for industrial purpose, we need to ensure that there's environmental conservation for the appropriate lands.

(2) We need to make sure there's value for all municipalities that are involved.

(3) Employment opportunities will be for all.

(4) If there are potential housing opportunities, that those be identified up front.

When it comes to environmental conservation, the city of Barrie is not new to this. Over the last several terms of council, we've been purchasing land around Little Lake, which is just north of the city of Barrie. It actually separates Barrie from Springwater. We've been purchasing on both sides of our municipal boundary, to ensure that the land around Little Lake is conserved, that it is preserved for future generations. We will continue to do that.

As part of this plan to bring land into the city of Barrie, we're committing to create a conservation trust or environmental trust to place all of those lands into and ensure that they are still there for future generations. Additionally, all of our land that sits in the Bear Creek wetlands, which is a significant amount, and along the Hewitt's Creek corridor would be placed into this environmental trust, to make sure that the environment that we live in and we value so greatly is preserved for the future and our ecological heritage is respected.

Barrie is experiencing demand from existing employers who want to expand. We're constrained because we do not have shovel-ready, serviced lands. Over the past two weeks, a major employer announced they were leaving the city to expand somewhere else. That expansion is not happening on transit. It's not happening where you have either waste water or water services available; it's happening on private services.

Boundary adjustments and subsequent rezoning of lands abutting Barrie would allow for the advancement of service industrial lands for the city.

The timing's perfect. As you know, our OP is back open for the mayor to comment to the minister. As well, the master servicing plan for the city of Barrie are currently being updated. Council has 20 million additional infrastructure dollars committed to employment land strategy and this will create 20 years' worth of supply.

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

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Thank you.

Servicing of the boundaries can be expanded or upgraded. We're well-positioned based on our water and waste water, and this change will create 20,000 industrial manufacturing and warehousing jobs.

The city of Barrie, as I said, is a single-tier municipality and we value that greatly, Madam Chair, but we need help in order to make sure that we have all sides of our municipality and we are a complete municipality. We don't want folks on the 400 "parking lot" at 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.; we want them with their families and want them to be able to work here, in the city of Barrie.

Finally, I would leave this question with you: Where should development take place for industry: in the middle of a rural municipality, or on city services and public transit?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

We'll now move on to the Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition. You have seven minutes to begin and just a reminder to state your name.

Ms. Margaret Prophet: Sure. Good morning, Madam Chair and honourable committee members. My name is Margaret Prophet, and today I'm here representing the Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition.

Our coalition is composed of over 45 grassroots groups from across Simcoe county, including ratepayers' associations, faith-based organizations, farm organizations, naturalist clubs, housing and anti-poverty advocates, as well as environmental organizations. Our coalition is focused on ensuring that our communities are healthy, prosperous and climate-friendly, now and into the future.

As a result, we tend to advocate around issues of land use planning and environmental policy. We also recognize that a healthy democracy is a necessary component to ensuring wise decision-making and effective policy.

Today, our coalition would like to outline its support for maintaining a regional governance role for the county of Simcoe. In particular, we would like to submit that additional powers should be given to the county to enable it to facilitate the financing for water and waste water infrastructure. Our coalition believes that doing so would encourage more cost-effective growth and a coordinated approach that could see finite resources, both environmental and financial, used more effectively.

Currently, the county of Simcoe allocates growth to its 16 lower-tier municipalities. Those municipalities then plan for growth, including necessary roads and waste water infrastructure. And while the county devises a strategy of where growth should take place and what should be protected, it doesn't have the ability to transfer that strategy at a ground level through appropriate investments in infrastructure that would help realize the growth strategy.

We've seen multiple implications of this. Many municipalities within the county are facing significant infrastructure deficits without the financial means to settle them. Small, lower-tier municipalities struggle to get developments online due to high servicing costs, which requires them to either go to lower-cost, riskier and potentially more environmentally harmful options, such as communal servicing, or they have to take on costly front-ending agreements with developers. Further, high construction costs for extensive servicing infrastructure delays projects.

Not only does this have broad impacts on municipal finances and the efficient provision of much-needed housing, this has an impact on our water resources too. Growth concentrated in the wrong areas with servicing that has less environmental oversight, with costs that will not be recuperated through new assessments and that doesn't consider the impacts to larger ecosystems and watersheds puts much at risk.

That is why we are calling for a clear, consistent, top-level approach to growth management, including infrastructure planning and financing. We believe that the upper tiers should bring its capacity to help lower tiers make

strong decisions on how to manage the growth that is allocated to it. This would include comparative analysis of full lifecycle servicing costs for servicing new infrastructure projects. Watershed analysis and climate change impacts would also help provide certainty for development projects across Simcoe county, knowing where development is best suited and where it should be avoided.

To expand on this point, I'd like the committee to better understand Simcoe county's water context. Like several regions in Ontario, this area is facing a dire water future that will only be exacerbated by climate change.

My concerns about the appropriate governance and strategic growth plan for this area and its impacts on water were already discussed in the intergovernmental action plan for Simcoe county in 2006. That multi-million-dollar study linked that the way growth was managed and the lack of coordinated servicing approach had implications for water reserves in the area, concluding "unique growth and development challenges exist in Simcoe county and the cities of Barrie and Orillia.... South Simcoe and Barrie, in particular, are experiencing increased development pressure, and are expected to continue to have rapid growth. A number of the municipalities in the study area rely on inland water systems which have been demonstrated to be under strain.... Without intervening action, the available potable water and aquatic habitats of these watersheds are threatened."

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The same report also concluded that our two main watersheds, Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga Valley, were nearing their assimilative capacity to accommodate growth. Six years later, the county's water and waste water visioning strategy recognized that most Simcoe County residents rely solely on ground water for their drinking water supply, and therefore protecting these sources of water was essential.

In 2014, source water protection committee assessment reports projected that due to climate change, municipal wells in the area may need to be drilled deeper, new sources of water be found and surface water intake pipes be moved or redesigned due to climate impacts.

None of our municipalities have a population greater than 45,000 people. Most of the 60 municipalities have populations well under 30,000. These lower tiers are well suited to determine how they would like their communities to evolve and mature, but most don't have the resources to do the necessary studies or the wide lens needed to keep the regional systems, including water, protected and preserved. This requires a coordinated approach and extends beyond municipal boundaries. It also requires that the level of government that is responsible for the strategic direction and growth management for our area has a tool to support those decisions at the local level. This is the same for natural heritage systems, agricultural systems, regional transportation and transit, as well as social services.

In summary, I want you to consider the decisions you're making with this committee about regional governments from the perspective of citizens who want their governments to work together to ensure a healthy future for all. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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

We'll now start the question-and-answer part, and we're going to start with the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Burch, if you'd like to go ahead.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you all for appearing today, and thanks for hosting us in Barrie, Mayor. I think I'll start with Margaret Prophet from the Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition. You talked about the upper tier having more control of the infrastructure and financing. How do you feel that will lead to more coordination? And can you provide examples where a lack of coordination has led to the problems that you're talking about in your presentation?

Ms. Margaret Prophet: Through you, Madam Chair: One of the problems is that, for example, when there's cost analysis of how government dollars are spent, municipalities can determine how infrastructure is costed and determine where that would go. However, what we think should be happening, looking at a regional level about where we're directing growth—right now, the county of Simcoe doesn't do an analysis to determine, "Okay, if we service growth in this area, it's going to cost us \$5 billion. If we service it here, it's going to be \$2 billion"—or whatever; I'm just making up numbers here. So what ends up happening is that the growth gets allocated, but then municipalities are stuck trying to figure out how to service that. Sometimes, like I said, it ends up going to communal services which have a high failure rate and less environmental oversight than infrastructure that is lake-based or fully serviced.

York region, for example, went through a cost analysis of where they should be servicing growth. Basically, they looked at their population and said, "If we put it here, it's going to cost us more; if we put the population there, it's going to cost us less." Those are the kinds of analysis that need to be done if you're really respecting the taxpayer, and unfortunately the county doesn't have the financial power to do that, they don't have the authority to do that, and I think that they could coordinate with their lower tiers much better.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you very much.

Next question, for Mayor Leduc from the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury: You talked about greater autonomy for lower tiers, and I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about how you feel would lead to efficiency.

Mr. James Leduc: Through you, Madam Chair: The idea of having autonomy is the fact that we have—I want to refer back to our employment lands; let me go to that first. The employment lands we have in Bradford started in 2004. We had just, in 2019, put our first building in the employment lands. Being a lower-tier municipality, we have to wait for the upper tier to agree to things.

In the end, being more efficient is, in a sense—we need a little bit of autonomy for ourselves to do our own official plan. We started an official plan in 2017, and we're still waiting for it to be passed at the upper tier and through the province.

Bradford has been a farming community. We've been very efficient with what we do. We've watched our taxes. We've kept our increases lower and we believe that we have the infrastructure in the ground right now. We put a lot of money into that ground. We've got hundreds of millions of dollars worth of infrastructure in the ground to help with growth, and if we have more autonomy, we can move that growth faster.

This year alone, we're only at 24% of our actual targets for growth. That is because we keep getting stymied by the upper-level government. And it's not that I'm picking on Simcoe county; it's just that we need a little bit more opportunity for us to do our own planning and move forward with our own system. We are unique to the county. We're a large urban centre within the county, and we're unique in a sense because we're very close to the GTA. The GTA really has bigger demands on us than the county itself.

We just think if we get more autonomy to run our own opportunities, we'll create a better and efficient system within Bradford to help with the housing crisis, because we have employment plans right now, and we have hundreds of millions of dollars in those employment lands that we want to bring employers to. If we can't provide the housing, they're not going to come to Bradford. They're going to look elsewhere.

We're hoping that through this process we can get a little bit more autonomy and become a little more structured for dealing with our own issues and problems.

Mr. Jeff Burch: You talked about representation by population among the municipalities in Simcoe county. I'm from Niagara; that's an issue that has been going on for 30 or 40 years. Does your municipality have a preferred model that you're promoting to make the representation fair?

Mr. James Leduc: Through you, Madam Chair: Yes, we certainly do. It's rep-by-pop. We believe that we're a fast-growing community, and when it comes to 32 people at the table and we only get two votes, it just doesn't seem to work for us. If there was a way that we could go to the system where it's rep-by-pop, it would work for us. It has to be a structure where we get value for our votes. We can go to a weighted system, but it still doesn't work. We pay 48% of the budget, but we only have 36% of the votes, so no matter what, we can't control our destiny, because we're outvoted no matter what.

I think it needs to be that the county gets restructured, to look at the voting system, to ensure that you have a proper representation for the people that pay the taxes. We're all about making sure that we get fair representation for everyone. We're asking that we look at it.

The county is an old system that was designed way back. It has worked for many, many years, but I'm of the belief that we need to restructure governance a little bit, so that we better provide services for our residents throughout Ontario—not just the county, but throughout Ontario. It's not getting any cheaper for the cost of living, so the more efficient we get, the better off we are.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you.

How much time do I have left?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A minute and a half.

Mr. Jeff Burch: A minute and a half? So maybe you could talk a little bit more, as well, about the issue of duplication. You mentioned that in your presentation. That was addressed in the motion passed by council. Can you talk a little bit more about examples of duplication that you want to address through this process?

Mr. James Leduc: Well, just when it comes right down to the planning process—I mean, we have a full planning department that does planning. We do our own official plan, but we have to go through the county to get that addressed and be approved through the county. When it comes to that type of service, we think it's duplicative there. We can be better served if we have our own, and we would be able to pass our own official plan and move that down to the province. That's one area. I think the county has a role to play in our area—there are no ifs, ands or buts—and I think there are areas where we can improve servicing. We can go into shared policing, shared fire services and areas like that. They have a co-operative there and we have a library; there is duplication in that system.

In my mind, I think when I talk about duplication, it has to be that we get more autonomy and become—you know, if I can say it, maybe Bradford becomes a separate city within the county, if that's a policy we can get to, because we just know we have a great opportunity to help support the Conservative government. We have the bypass coming through. We have a lot of industrial people talking to us. It's just a matter of us being in charge of our own destiny, so that we can better provide for the residents of Bradford and Simcoe county overall.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thanks very much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The time is up.

I'll move to the independent, MPP McMahon, four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much. I don't have as much time, so we're going to be speed-talking. Thank you very much for your presentations, for coming today and inviting us to your neighbourhood—great presentations.

My colleague stole some of my questions for you, Mayor Leduc, but anyways: I missed—you had four requests. Can you just go through them? You were a bit of a speed talker there, which I appreciate. Go through them again.

Mr. James Leduc: Okay. Fair and democratic representation for all member municipalities; structure and practice that are in place that deliver efficient decision-making and good governance; service-area responsibilities are clearly defined, aligned and avoid duplicative or overly cumbersome processes; and the lower-tier municipalities possess greater autonomy.

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

At one point you mentioned that you wished for appropriate resources and support, and I'm wondering if you can elaborate what that looks like to you.

Mr. James Leduc: Resources from the province?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes.

Mr. James Leduc: Okay. The big one is that the province is supporting us with the bypass—there's a \$4-billion investment, potentially, for that bypass—and we want to be able to provide housing and job opportunities for the province of Ontario. We believe that we're going to be an area, with Toronto's growth and everybody pushing north, that we could be a provider of housing and employment for Ontarians—I think it was Mayor Nuttall that touched on it—by having people at home rather than being on the highways.

The province supporting us through that can support our industrial growth, our industrial lands and support our housing. We can then provide housing for those people. So just that support alone would be something that we're looking for and, giving us the autonomy to be on our own, I think we can be better supporters of the government's housing demand.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, it's disturbing to find out that you're waiting on all these approvals. I don't know if you wanted to talk more about that, but I'm alarmed at that, personally.

Mr. James Leduc: I refer back to the fact that our employment lands started in 2004, and we only got our first building in 2019. I'd look at our official plan: We started in 2017, and we are not completed with that yet through the province. When it has to go through certain steps, it costs time, and when it's time, it costs money. Time is money.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Absolutely. Thank you.

Over to Mayor Nuttall: Thanks again for inviting us here—a great presentation, with all the nice graphics and whatnot. You mentioned—oh, I love this—moving city-owned properties to the market to build housing. I love that, because we talk about this all the time at the province—getting shovels in the ground—and we don't look at our own backyards, our own provincial lands. And when we do, we don't put in affordable housing when we should. So I wonder if you can give us some examples of your city-owned properties you're bringing to market.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Yes, thank you so much. Unfortunately, I'm not able to announce the exact properties until the 16th of November, but I'll describe them, if that makes sense.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: We have properties—whether it's in our core, along the 400, or in existing neighbourhoods—that have certainly sat in our balance sheet, but each year, they become a liability in the sense that they cost us money to maintain, to insure. You're lucky you came in November and not in January, because you would see the liability related to snow. And so we see those as opportunities. Whether they're buildings that are no longer required by the city or just empty pieces of space, if they're not parkland and they're not going to have a negative impact on the community around them, they should be put into the housing supply.

So we're moving towards that. I'll make sure that I send it to your office, MPP McMahon, once we announce the exact properties, because I know you're very familiar with the area. You'll be able to see some of our plans coming to fruition.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And please let us know if there are any provincial lands that you would like to look at.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I'm not sure it's for housing, but the Barrie Jail would be something the city would love to have conveyed to us, as it's a heritage piece in downtown.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Not intentionally cutting you off, but you're out of time.

Over to the government side for seven and a half minutes: MPP Coe, please begin.

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question, through you, Chair, is to the mayors. Thank you both for your presentations. I'm particularly pleased that you're both dedicated and your staff are to getting homes built faster.

In your presentations, you also spoke a little bit about the ways that municipal governments can streamline processes. Mayor Nuttall, you talked about removing red tape and accelerated approvals in a two-tier-government situation. I want you to elaborate more on that, because I think it's material to part of our deliberations as we move forward.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Thank you, MPP Coe, for the question. For the city of Barrie, we've seen an opportunity with regards to the CIHA that was brought in. The opportunity, I think, really puts the responsibility on the municipal governments to determine when things need to move faster than they are capable of doing.

I'll give you a real-life example. On Yonge Street in Barrie, we have a property that sat vacant for maybe 25 to 30 years that could have been developed. It's across the street from a GO train station. We had a long-term-care company come in and request to put in some long-term-care units as well as apartment buildings—a pretty dense development, again, across the street from a GO train station. Our staff actually came to us and said, "This needs to move faster, in order to hit the deadlines that we're capable of doing. We should actually exercise the CIHA in this case." We received that request on June the 20-something. We approved the CIHA request on the 16 of August, and it's with the province now.

That's an example of government realizing, "Hey, this can be done faster. It can be done better." We have a massive need for long-term-care beds in the city of Barrie, and whatever we can do to get those built faster, we want to be on the province's side on.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Mayor Leduc, I know that we've had previous discussion about the challenges associated with planning and development and the length of time, potentially, it does take. I'd like you to elaborate a little bit more fully on that particular topic and use some examples if you would, please. Thank you.

Mr. James Leduc: Yes, and thank you for the question—through you, Madam Chair.

I want to refer back to our council itself. Our council, in this term, has taken on some really big challenges. We've

decided that we need to restructure our whole system, so we're looking at a full organizational review to ensure that we're ready for the growth and we're ready for moving forward with the challenges that the province of Ontario has.

When it comes to growth, we've actually donated different parcels of land to LOFT. LOFT has taken the land, and we had a 50-unit system with LOFT. We donated free land to them, and they're going to build 100 transitional beds for us—a great project that has been trying to move forward. We've just been held back with that project for a bit, and we're a little bit behind. We would have liked to have that project already going in the ground, shovels ready, but it looks like we're going to miss the target for this year and we're going to hopefully get it for next year.

When it comes to planning, this is where we think our council has done a great job of getting ready. We're trying to move forward. We think the CIHA is an opportunity that we can take advantage of moving forward, because we have a lot of areas where we're sitting here, waiting for some decisions to be made, and it's just not happening fast enough. If we're going to deliver those employment lands, and like I said, I can't rate it any further—we have hundreds of millions of dollars in the ground with our employment lands, and we're looking to make sure that we can bring the housing to provide the opportunity for our employers to come to our community.

I have sat with previous businesses that have come and looked at Bradford, and the number one issue was that we just didn't have enough housing for them to come to our community because they were worried about the employment circle that they couldn't gather enough from. It is a big push for companies to come to a different area because you move employees who have been in their area for a long time, so it's a very difficult one.

Again, we just need to make sure that we have the tools to ensure that we can plan effectively and move forward so that we can meet the targets of the employers that are coming to our community, because that's the key. When they come to us and they give us a date, we want to be there and have that for them. The key is to have some autonomy to make sure that we can do that on our own so that we can provide those services for all Ontarians.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you very much for your responses and getting things done.

Chair, through you, to my colleagues, who I know have questions.

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

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and through you: Thank you to all the mayors for their presentations. I liked the presentation from Barrie. Here, you are emphasizing more on the industrial and their quest to add industrial. I have two questions for you. You know industrial is a heavy labour—and which goes along with our goals because we are receiving 500,000 new immigrants. I see Barrie as a potentially good attraction because of their proximity to the GTA. It could be potentially attracting some of those new immigrants.

My two questions for you: (1) Do you think that you have an advantage to be able to attract this high-density

labour to Barrie versus closer to the GTA? (2) If that happened, do you have the plans for housing to be able to cope with this request and new immigrants coming to Barrie? The expansions, basically.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A minute and a half, if that helps.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: A minute and a half? Thank you.
1040

Two great questions: Number one, I think Barrie is fertile ground when it comes to immigration. The city has matured immensely over the years. We have three of 11 members of council who are new Canadians, including myself—I was born in Liverpool, England; Councillor Morales, who was born in Colombia; and Councillor Nigussie Nigussie, who was born in Ethiopia.

Our city has a world-class institution in Georgian College. We have university partnership programs in place. This is a great place for those who either are new Canadians or looking to become Canadians to settle.

Secondly, in terms of housing, about 20 years ago—15 years ago; I almost got ahead of myself there—there was a change in the city's boundary to the south. That change originally was going to result in about 30,000 people and 10,000 jobs. In the last moment, the legislation changed it to 45,000 people and 5,000 jobs. Hence, why I'm here today, because we now have a massive over-commitment to residential development and under-commitment to jobs to people who moved here. We're really trying to right-size that change from 15 years ago. There is more than enough housing and we're ready for folks to move here.

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: I'm sharing my time with—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): No, you're not. There is only nine seconds left, but there is another round.

Okay, we'll go over to the official opposition, MPP Burch.

Mr. Jeff Burch: A couple of questions for the city of Barrie: Mayor Nuttall, you talked about expansion of your boundaries. Where would those discussions be at with neighbouring municipalities? And when you approach other municipalities, would you approach them individually or would you approach a county or both?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I've done less approaching of the county. I've only had one conversation with a warden at the county about it. We have had, I would say, informal conversations with one municipality on four or five occasions where we've actually met, had meetings and discussed what certainly our requests are from the city of Barrie's perspective. We've actually made an in-camera presentation to the other municipality as well. So I want to respect that in-camera, unless it's superseded this committee and you tell me if it is.

I think that the conversations—why don't I tell you what we've said, because I'm very comfortable doing that? What we've said is if there is land coming into the city of Barrie that results in development—not the conservation stuff, but the actual developable property—what we'll do is we will service 10% of it back to the other municipality. Essentially, that allows them to be able to tap into dollars for their operating budgets and be able to

provide land in their own municipality, which I think is very important for them going forward.

In the meantime, as lands get developed, we would give them 10% of the revenue associated with what's coming online inside the city of Barrie. That allows the services and the proper regulations to services and expansions take place. At the same time, there is a silver lining to what is a very difficult situation for those municipalities.

Mr. Jeff Burch: When you go down that road, would you need to procedurally speak to both the individual municipalities and the county, to get their permission, so to speak?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Yes, let me say it like this: If the province isn't acting on it, the request I think is between the three mayors, not necessarily the county. If the county wanted to be part of the conversation, I think that would have been prevalent by now.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Would the county be able to block it if you had an agreement with those mayors?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I do not know the answer to that, sir.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I was really interested in the conservation efforts around Little Lake when I read your presentation. You talked about conservation or environmental trust; I would like to learn a little bit more about that. Also, is that something you feel that, as a single-tier municipality, it's easier to do?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I think everything is easier to do as a single-tier municipality. You know what, we've done a lot of hard work building faith in the community on that, like purchasing the land around Little Lake. It's been successive councils; I'm not going to say it was me, right.

With regards to the details of it, our staff need to figure that out. Our public service need to figure that out. What we envision is something that includes members of the municipalities, but also stakeholders in the community. I look at Margaret Prophet and the work that's done through the coalition; they need to be at the table. There are lots of folks who need to be at the table on this, making sure that we do it right and that we do it for the long-term.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Okay. And the city lands that you're going to be using for development: How are you ensuring that parkland is a part of it and that there's a mix of development, including affordable development?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Thank you so much for the question. I'm really trying to convey the fabric of our city and our council. Four out of 11 members of the council, including myself, grew up in government housing, so we get it, right?

When it comes to our own lands, we're going to be working with whoever are the respective buyers at the end, to ensure that the affordable components outlined in our official plan are respected. We'll hopefully have more information as we go through the process of making those lands available.

When it comes to parkland, we have a beautiful supply of parkland in the city of Barrie, all around our waterfront, right throughout all of the different communities. Those need to be protected and preserved as parkland, so that as

some of this intensification happens, it's able to be utilized more than it is even right now.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Okay, thank you.

How much time do I have?

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Two and a half minutes? Okay.

I'm going to go back to Margaret and just ask: In the opinion of your organization, are lower-tier municipalities across the county coordinating efforts toward conservation and protecting the environment the way that they should? And what role is the county playing in that?

Ms. Margaret Prophet: I think it's hard to paint with a broad brush. Some are doing a really great job of protecting their urban green spaces. But what the committee needs to know is that the natural heritage system that was designated across the county is managed by the county, so that means each municipality just has a piece of it.

My presentation today was talking about the systems that are outside of municipal boundaries, so you've got the natural heritage system as well as the agricultural systems. You've got ecosystems like Lake Simcoe; which municipality is going to make sure that they take care of Lake Simcoe, right? They all need to be a part of it.

So when we're talking about regional coordination, it wasn't to limit the autonomy of lower tiers, but more to assist them in how to manage the systems appropriately. I also think that can be used for more certainty for development, because then you know where you can go and where you can't go, and you can get infrastructure in the ground easier.

Mr. Jeff Burch: And how is having a county do that better than just having an agreement between the municipalities doing it?

Ms. Margaret Prophet: Well, who is going to be the one that is the repository for the metrics? Who's going to be measuring it? Who's going to be implementing it? Who's going to be making sure that it's done?

You're talking about some municipalities that might have a planner, plus they have to then staff for new developments. There's a lot of work done at the municipal level and their staff work very hard, but they don't always have the resources to do those things. So now, if you're talking about getting lower-tier municipalities to manage system-wide, who is doing that? Who's paying for that? Who are the staff that are going to be attributed to that? It makes more sense to keep it regional, because that's how the zoning is done.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

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

We'll move on to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much, and thank you, Margaret, for coming in. Thank you for giving us your great presentation.

You mentioned at one point about this full-life-cycle servicing cost. Do you want to elaborate on that? Like, is there a gold standard you've seen somewhere?

Ms. Margaret Prophet: Well, usually a gold standard would be a financial impact analysis. Not all municipalities do them, but the idea is—there's kind of a myth that the growth that we will see will always pay for itself. What we know now is that growth in certain places will be a net benefit to the community, and growth being put in other places can sometimes be a drain.

For example, in my township of Springwater, there was a very large development put through. After new assessments were factored in, because they had to do waste water treatment plants, they were going to be in the hole \$30 million to \$50 million. That's a township of roughly 20,000 or 21,000 people, and how do they get out of that?

Full-life-cycle cost talks about the replacement cost of the assets: Who's going to do that, how much is that going to cost in 20 years and will this be a net financial benefit for it?

1050

That's what we would like to see done, versus just focusing on the upfront number, which is that this is going to cost—this piece of infrastructure is \$64 million; well, that doesn't include necessarily maintenance, operation and replacement down the road.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And do you have an example of a municipality who has done that well, that financial impact assessment?

Ms. Margaret Prophet: Well, I would go back to Springwater township, that did that financial impact analysis that found that they were \$30 to \$50 million out but they went through with the development anyway. So it's not just about having the data; it's also making sure that the data informs the decisions.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Thanks.

I wanted to thank Mayor Leduc for feeding us soup and salad—capital, whatever you said. It's so great. Holland Marsh is so vital to our existence. And thank you to Mayor Nuttall for this interesting environmental trust idea; I'd like to learn more about that later on.

I don't have much time, so we're just going to do a speed round. As we research and study this, do you have one piece of advice for us. We'll start with Margaret.

Ms. Margaret Prophet: Oh, sure, put me first.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And we have fewer than two minutes.

Ms. Margaret Prophet: One piece of advice as you're researching this: I think that what we're seeing is multiple crises, whether it be housing, climate, water. Governance plays a large part in how those decisions are made, so I think this committee should be looking at how they can build governance to make sure that those crises are managed properly.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, thank you so much. One and a half minutes for you two, so share, please.

Mr. James Leduc: If you don't mind, Bradford council has taken their environment seriously. We are a farming community, and we understand that farming and growth can coexist. We have a nine-member council; two members are both vice-chairs of the conservation authorities. We supported the 44-tonne reduction of Lake Simcoe. We want

to protect Lake Simcoe. There is no better understanding of your environment than your local council, when it comes right down to it.

So Bradford certainly supports the phosphorous plant, if it's either built in York region or Bradford West Gwillimbury. We are 100% behind that. We understand our environment. We understand what we want to do for climate change. We have a green initiatives committee that we fired up. We want to be stewards of our community. We want to make sure that we protect our community. We want to make sure that we protect Lake Simcoe, Georgian Bay, all of that. And there's no better area to be done than with a local council, so we think that's where the planning comes into effect. And we partner with Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great.

Thirty seconds now for you: a piece of advice.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Look, I think that all that has been given is great. My piece of advice to this committee would be to focus on servicing. Servicing is paramount. We live in one of the largest countries in the world in terms of land mass. That's not the issue. We want to make sure that any development and growth that takes place is serviced, that the wasted water is treated effectively, efficiently, and we preserve the environment that we have, and the only way to do that is through the property servicing. Therefore, servicing is paramount.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you so much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Excellent.

And over to the government's side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Pang, please start.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to Mayor Leduc: Your town is in a two-tier municipality under Simcoe county. So are there responsibilities and services that will be more defined or combined or integrated among existing lower governments to support the construction of new homes and the provision of effective local governance?

Mr. James Leduc: Yes. I guess I could refer—is there any chance I can refer this to my CAO that's with us? Can I turn it over to him?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes. Just state your name and you can begin. I believe you're on screen there, so please start. You have to tell me which member.

Mr. James Leduc: Geoff McKnight, our CAO.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Geoff, are you there?

Mr. Geoff McKnight: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry; my audio had cut out a bit there. Could the member repeat his question?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes, just state your name—and do you want to repeat the question?

Mr. Billy Pang: Are there responsibilities and services that could be more defined or combined, moved from one government to another, or integrated among existing local governments to support the construction of new homes and the provision of effective local governance?

Mr. Geoff McKnight: Yes, thanks very much. Mayor Nuttall referred to the importance of ensuring that servicing is a well-planned-for and coordinated service, and whether

that continues on an informal basis among lower-tier municipalities—and we have some examples of shared hard services now, one of which is between the towns of Bradford West Gwillimbury and Innisfil on the supply of potable water—or if that is taken to a more formal level with a capital-R regional system, either way those partnerships need to continue and probably become further ingrained with how we move forward, both in water and waste water systems.

There has been some work done in that regard at the county level, with some service reviews undertaken in the past couple of years. We would encourage that to be further assessed through this committee's work—again, to either look at it becoming a formal responsibility for an upper-tier government, or putting into place more formal opportunities for lower tiers to work collaboratively on our planning and in the actual construction of those infrastructure services.

That's one example, and probably the most important one to support our growth, moving forward.

Mr. Billy Pang: So you agree that, to a certain extent, this integration will benefit your town.

Mr. Geoff McKnight: I believe it would, yes.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you. I pass my question to—

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the mayors and Ms. Prophet as well for your presentations today.

My question is, actually, for Ms. Prophet. In your assessment, what is a better place to see large-scale industrial growth? Would it be in the centre of a rural municipality or in a city on municipal water, waste water and on, I'm assuming, transit as well, obviously, in a larger urban centre?

Ms. Margaret Prophet: Through you, Madam Chair, I think that what the—our position has always been that full servicing is better. That was always the tiered approach, where full servicing was prioritized, and then it worked down from communal to private servicing. That servicing hierarchy has now been changed so that they're all equal, but we believe that that is the best way to service industrial or housing.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you. I now pass it to my colleague.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Again, I'm going to refer my question to the mayor from Barrie. It's very interesting to see these proposed details about the shared lands between different municipalities. Can you explain a little bit—first of all, I am not sure how that will work in regard to the governments sharing lands; I just have to state that on the record. Does that look like you are moving those lands to Barrie and this portion of sharing of the revenue will be, like, just charged to the other municipality but it's going to be part of Barrie, if they agree to expand the boundaries? And how will that be financially viable? Is it continuous, endless, indefinite?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Thank you so much, MPP Sabawy. So, a couple of things: First of all, the land that we're asking for needs to be in the city of Barrie because

we are the only one with the people infrastructure to manage large-scale development as well as real infrastructure.

The piece that we would then convey back to the other municipality would sit inside of their municipality but be serviced by us. We would extend the services across the border to allow for them to control their own destiny and to reap those tax dollars forever. In the interim, as land comes online, we would share the percentage with those municipalities so it's not, you know, 10 years before they even reap a dollar. I think it needs to be, in some cases, a partnership between Barrie and the surrounding area.

And I would say this: A strong Barrie relies on the rural area around it, right? It's a city that is surrounded by agriculture and food. We need that to continue, going forward, because it's just good planning.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Sorry, and just a 10-second answer: How is the attraction—like, how did you find that received by the surrounding municipalities? And very short, in 10 seconds, please.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: They haven't said no yet.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm passing the question to my colleague.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Kusendova-Bashta.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much. My question will be to Mayor Leduc. Recently, we hosted a very successful dementia event in your municipality with Minister Mulroney. You have an avid senior population. They're very engaged, so that's really wonderful.

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Also, thank you for mentioning Lake Simcoe and protections of the lake. I know that our new Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, MPP Andrea Khanjin, is a big champion of Lake Simcoe and, you know, it's really great to see her in that portfolio because I think her work on Lake Simcoe was really fundamental to her actually becoming the minister.

But, Mayor, can you tell us what other measures can be taken to improve the planning process in a big municipality like yours?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): And 24 seconds.

Mr. James Leduc: Okay, 24 seconds? Just absolutely having the autonomy to actually do our own planning. So, Bradford just did a leisure services master plan and we are at 1.1 hectares per 1,000 people. We want to get to 1.3 hectares per 1,000 people for recreation.

We don't have the lake in our community, but I'll tell you what: We love the lake, and we love to go up and see Barrie and play at that lake. But we need the autonomy; we need the planning ability to do it ourselves. We're the best at it. Thank you.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): And with that—the best of the three. Thank you very much for presenting today. You're certainly welcome to stay for the remainder of the committee meeting. I'll give you a few moments to move away from the table and the next group to come forward, so thank you again.

TOWN OF OAKVILLE

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF DURHAM

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'll ask the town of Oakville and the regional municipality of Durham if they would like to come forward to the table and get settled in. Note that the last individual, Rory Nisan, has withdrawn, so there will just be the two presenters.

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Both mayors, I guess, are at the table, then if you have other people somewhere—online? Okay, we'll get that all sorted out if you want to do any questions there also. I'll give you a second, because we all seem to be socializing here. Thanks for coming all this way.

Interjection: It was an amazing drive. Everything worked.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Everything worked? We'll report back with that. Thank you for saying that.

All right, I think we will begin. On the agenda, it says, Mayor Burton, you are to start with the town of Oakville, if that's okay, for seven minutes.

Mr. Rob Burton: Sure.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): When you're ready—they're in the room; they're coming.

Mr. Rob Burton: Oh, okay.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): But go ahead, just to keep on the schedule, then we'll move to Henry.

Mr. Rob Burton: All right. Madam Chair and members, thank you very much for the opportunity to share some information with you.

I have four sets of notes to say: (1) I want to give you some of my credentials for what I will say; (2) I want to give you the history of the creation of regional governance—and the secret there is that it's temporary; (3) I want to speak about the problem with regional governance, which is that it's slow; and (4) I want to offer you a solution for regional governance problems, and that is evolution.

So, first, my credentials: For 17 years and five terms, I've been Oakville's mayor and a Halton region council member. I'm a retired businessman who founded YTV. I became mayor at 60, the same age as Hazel. I came to my job with a businessperson's eyes. I looked for ways to make it work more effectively and more efficiently.

I've been busy as mayor. I led the Halton Police Board for 10 years. I've been an active board member of the housing corporation and the conservation authority. I created the Oakville Municipal Development Corp. and Oakville Enterprises, among others.

When I read the Municipal Act, I saw that we are expected to deliver municipal services “efficiently and effectively.” As a taxpayer, I was good with that. That's why I introduced performance-based budgeting. That's why my community has enjoyed overall tax increases held to CPI or less. Maybe that's why I'm still mayor.

The architect of regional government in Ontario was Darcy McKeough. He was municipal affairs minister under both Premiers John Robarts and Bill Davis. As I'll show, he provided what I think of as inspirational guidance for

the path he put us on. I tout my track record so you'll see why I identify with what was said by former Minister McKeough about how we should organize and deliver municipal services for our residents.

Second, the history of regional governance: It's temporary. I was delighted when Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Paul Calandra requested this committee to examine regional governance. I commissioned York University professor Dr. Zach Spicer to write a thorough history of how, starting around 50 years ago, we got the two-tier system. I wanted everyone to know what it was supposed to achieve. The Clerk has copies for you, I believe and hope.

Dr. Spicer's paper also has contemporary correspondence with former Minister McKeough on how he thinks it all turned out. On page 17, Dr. Spicer writes, from that correspondence with Mr. McKeough, "In Halton, specifically, he argues the region should be dissolved and 'two strong cities' should stand in its place: Burlington and Oakville."

Former Minister McKeough said the top extra layer of municipal government was supposed to be only temporary. When small municipalities being helped by larger ones were strong enough to make it on their own, he thought they shouldn't burden the larger cities any longer. Since regions were to make larger cities help smaller rural settlements grow up, isn't it fair to ask when the now-grown-up kids leave home?

Former Minister McKeough said municipalities should not be frozen in time. We should always be innovating and improving the way we organize to deliver services to our residents. That inspirational spirit is what drove me in business. That spirit still drives me as mayor.

Thirdly, what is the problem with regional governance? It's slow. Ontario has already realized that two tiers of planning approvals stretch out the length of time it takes to get anything built in Ontario. Ontario decided to make our two-tier planning processes faster by devolving regional planning to the local tier; it just hasn't been implemented yet.

But consolidating planning, although it will be a good start, will not be enough to speed things up, and that is because everything else—and not just servicing—at the municipal level is connected to growth too. That's why growth will stay slower than we need it to be in a two-tier system, even when planning is devolved to the local level.

So what's the solution? The solution for regional governance is evolution. An upper legislative chamber always functions to delay things, full stop. Think of the extra cycle of council meetings at the regional level. Think of the Senate. In Lean Six Sigma and Toyota systems, you remove unnecessary steps to gain efficiency and value.

Ontario has certainly seen that an extra municipal council on top of local councils is inefficient and no longer needed, because Ontario has enacted the Hazel McCallion dissolution-of-Peel act in June. There are more effective and efficient ways to deliver shared municipal services than in a system of two-tiered councils. Utilities and service boards are better because of less short-term-oriented, politically reactive interference in long-range capital and service

planning. Ideally, utility and service boards are guided by qualified directors with relevant credentials and experience, serving provincial and local needs and policies.

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Putting shared services in utilities and service boards gets rid of delay, duplication and obstruction. It saves money for services or for lower taxes.

Oakville pays 42% of the bills of Halton for a third or less of Halton's services. We would save real money if we had boards and utilities collecting fees for services provided and used. We would also increase accountability and transparency with a single-tier structure for council that the public could more easily understand.

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

Mr. Rob Burton: Regional two-tier governance did the job it was supposed to do. If not now, how will we know when it's time to let mature municipalities like Oakville return to single-tier status, in an evolved way with shared service boards and utilities where they make sense?

Thank you very much. That was mercy; I greatly appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I didn't give you enough warning. I was so intent in listening there, so sorry about that.

Okay, thank you very much, Mayor Henry, for coming here. You can begin whenever you're ready.

Mr. John Henry: Well, thank you. I'm John Henry. I'm the regional chair and CEO of the regional municipality of Durham. I'm here representing Durham region, along with CAO Elaine Baxter-Trahair, who is online.

Durham region is located just east of Toronto and has a vibrant mix of urban and rural communities across over 2,500 square kilometres. This makes us four times the size of Toronto and the largest geographic region in the GTHA. Durham region is made up of eight local municipalities: Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa and Clarington, along with Brock, Uxbridge and Scugog in the north.

Our population is 745,000 and is forecasted to double to 1.3 million by 2051. We are a large and fast-growing region, and we welcome this growth. Businesses are setting up shop in Durham and people want to live here. We have three post-secondary institutions, a strong clean energy sector, vibrant downtowns and extensive green space. Durham is the clean energy capital of Canada, with 30% of Ontario's electricity being produced in Durham. The announcement of four small modular reactors to be built at OPG in Darlington sets us up to continue to fuel the future and become the clean-energy capital of the world.

Next year, Durham will celebrate its 50th anniversary. We have strong partnerships with our local municipalities. A joint statement put out this summer by myself and all eight local mayors spoke to the strong partnership. It's through this partnership that we have been able to support tremendous growth over the last decade. That partnership is key as we work together to support the housing target of 84,000 new homes by 2031. Housing pledges have been signed and work is under way to make this goal and a reality.

As the province has recognized, each region has its own uniqueness, and I would like to highlight the importance of the regional government in Durham. We focus on delivering a two-tier model that is fiscally responsible. The regional approach avoids duplication and ensures services are delivered where needed. Durham oversees and delivers policing, paramedics, transit, waste services, regional roads and bridges, long-term care, public health, income and support services, and early learning and child care services across the eight municipalities.

The region of Durham is also responsible for planning, constructing, operating and maintaining water and sewer plants and all related infrastructure. This is a critical role that ensures coordinated servicing across the eight municipalities, which enables housing growth. We're jointly operated with York region, an innovative energy-from-waste facility that produces savings of 25% per tonne of waste while generating enough electricity to power 10,000 homes. We provide all of these services to our community while being only one of a handful of municipalities in Canada recognized with an AAA credit rating. A key role for the region is the housing services system manager, where we support 6,000 units of affordable community housing. We're in the midst of housing and homelessness crisis, and the region is doing our part by supporting more than 250 new affordable housing units that are currently under development.

The region also provides back office services to a number of local municipalities including such things as our 311 customer service line, legal services, HR support and IT supports, to name a few. We share the responsibility for economic development and planning with our local municipalities.

For planning, Durham region oversees the official plan to assess the vision for the community and is our road map for the infrastructure that we'll need to build and accommodate our growth to 2051. It ensures that higher-order infrastructure like water treatment plants are planned and built and financed to service the planned development.

A regional approach to planning means that gentle efforts are less sensitive to particular neighbourhoods preferred for single-detached homes. In short, a regional vision helps support an affordable and adequate housing supply. The regional official plan we submitted to the province includes a 9,100-acre urban boundary expansion so we can welcome the residents and companies that we want to come to Durham.

We have attracted companies like FGF Brands, parent company to brands like Wonder Bread. They recently opened a massive high-tech commercial facility in Durham that will employ 3,000 people. They were attracted to Durham because of our skilled workforce and our servicing investments in north Pickering that enabled their new-build project to proceed smoothly. We worked closely with local municipalities on the development of the regional official plan. It was a collaborative process that will enable growth across the region.

The GO East extension strategy for Durham is a prime example of what can be achieved through effective part-

nership between regional and local municipalities. The GO East extension to Bowmanville has impacts and benefits that will touch more than one community, requiring coordinated action.

Our coordinated work will enable development of transit-oriented communities. We continue to provide leadership and collaboration with our local municipalities to ensure that necessary infrastructure is in place to meet our housing targets in a skilled, coordinated and fiscally responsible way. We believe the growth should pay for growth. We welcome the opportunity to work together with the province and our local municipalities to continue to enable growth in Durham region. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of effective regional government in Durham. And it's very nice to see many of you again; I was downtown not too long ago. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We're going to move to questions and answers—great presentations. And if it's okay, we'll start with the official opposition and MPP Burch for seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you both for your presentations; I really enjoyed them. Mayor Burton, you spoke about—and thanks for this by the way; this is really good research—how you see a future where significant growth and there are no longer regional governments. Would that be correct? So the premise is that regional governments were always meant to be temporary, and so the logical conclusion to that would be that at some point in the future there would be no more regional governments.

Mr. Rob Burton: Yes, and maybe the question is a little too black and white. In what former Minister McKeough said, we should be doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons; I think that's the way I would put it. And in some regions you might—we didn't bring in regional government in every place at the same day; it was a process, based in part on need. What I'm suggesting, and former Minister McKeough has suggested, is that in Oakville and Burlington—I'm only speaking for Oakville; I do not know what they think of former Minister McKeough's advice. He was saying that when it's no longer needed, you shouldn't have it. So I'm not saying it's no longer needed everywhere. In fact, I heard this morning that there may be places who would like to have it. As I've said at the end of my presentation, for us, it did its job the way it was supposed to. We hope that the committee will let us all know how we'll know when it's time to move on. Perhaps you'll be able to invent criteria for how you know when you don't need it anymore. In Oakville, I don't think we need it anymore.

Mr. Jeff Burch: The issues I see is that in a region—I'm not as familiar with your region to be fair; I'm from Niagara where this is obviously an issue. When you go down that road, if a municipality is allowed to leave a region and become a single tier, what happens to those other lower-tier municipalities? Because as we've heard from other presentations, there's not always the capacity when it comes to planning or economic development, for example. Do you advocate for forced amalgamations of lower tiers,

or do you think that this is just something that evolves gradually?

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Mr. Rob Burton: Well, I'm here to speak about Oakville, and I'm always reluctant to speak about my neighbours. I know many of the fine leaders of Niagara, and I think that I would defer to their opinion about their area.

What I've fastened on is the way former Minister McKeough said that you don't have to treat everybody the same all the time, or forever. That's the piece that I think is the most valuable piece of the history that Professor Spicer has brought forward for us.

I want to stress that when I say that we don't need the upper-level council, I'm not saying that we might not need shared services. I just think there are more efficient ways to be delivering them. In fact, I believe those ways will be deployed in Peel.

Mr. Jeff Burch: So you're talking about a utility model.

Mr. Rob Burton: Service boards and utilities—whatever structure makes sense.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you.

Mayor Henry, thank you for your presentation. Do you see regional governance as still something that is temporary, or have they evolved to become more permanent structures when we deal with things like planning and environmental protection?

Mr. John Henry: I can only speak for Durham, and I do see it as a permanent structure. I think for Durham, when you look at the vast size of Durham and what we deal with, our northern municipalities, the three in particular, pay the same water rates as the rest of the region. But for one of those municipalities to stand on their own would be almost impossible. We have a long-term-care facility in Beaverton, which is just right across the lake, that would be impossible for the Brock township to afford.

So when you look at how we have put all of our pieces together and the work that we've done and how we've collectively supported the nuclear industry, how we've invested in our colleges and university that is now turning out Canada's—Ontario Tech University is the only school where you can go and get a degree in nuclear engineering. So our investments in the region have worked very, very well. In part, it's now benefiting the entire country.

We're eight municipalities that come together. When you look at a pie and you divide it in eight, that's what the region is. The region is the pie plate; we hold it all together. But one single slice—you can't bake a single slice of pie. It's impossible. So the work that we do as regional government to support all eight municipalities is essential to developing what we have now, the growth centre that we have.

We are the fastest-growing region in the province. We are attracting businesses each and every day to the region. I mentioned one; we're also home to General Motors, Kubota, Toyota's new warehousing facilities. When you look at what's happening across the region, it has become a place of choice for people to develop their businesses.

While I have nothing really to say toward what's happening in other parts and other regions, in Durham, it really does work well. The fact that all eight mayors agreed

and signed the letter we sent is a show of how well it does work.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Two of the concerns that are often raised about upper-tier governments are, first of all, duplication, and secondly, the speed with which you can get things done, having to go through two tiers. How would you answer that in Durham?

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

Mr. John Henry: What I would do is I would invite you to Durham and let me show you the growth that's going on right now. You will be shocked. We're able to work together, and we do it well.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thanks for your presentations. Just following up on my colleague's comment to John Henry, we actually heard from a mayor at committee not too long ago, and it does seem like you work well together. My question is, you don't find any—what we've heard this morning is there's duplication, there's delays, there's obstacles; you don't seem to face that with your region.

Mr. John Henry: I think, for us, it's the level in which all eight municipalities work together. Our CAOs meet on a very regular basis, so it does work well together. In the region, I can only say that if you were to come to Durham region right now, we have growth in all eight municipalities, including just across the road in Beaverton, and that makes me very proud.

It takes a lot of work, and the three northern municipalities—we supply support services to those municipalities. Their economic development officer comes from the region. IT and legal services are provided by the region. If they were to have to go out and purchase those or hire those people, it would be incredibly unaffordable for those municipalities.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. But you're okay, as Mayor Burton said—he was quoting—you don't have to treat everyone the same all the time. You're okay if other regions are interested in standing alone. You're okay with that? You don't think it's like one cookie cutter, one solution for everyone?

Mr. John Henry: Yes, I agree with that. I was the mayor of Oshawa. I had a great relationship with Mayor Burton on the auto caucus. We worked well together when I was the mayor of Oshawa, and now I'm still working with that group of people.

What works well for one community may not work well for another community, but in Durham, what we have right now does work. Continuous improvement is done. We have regional rationalization, and we have a bylaw that says that every 12 years, we have to look at the rationalization of where regional councillors are located in the region.

In fairness to our northern municipalities, they are all guaranteed, always, to have to have two. So each of our three northern municipalities have two and we rationalize, by population, the distribution of regional councillors along the lakeshore communities to five.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Wow. Interesting. Okay, great.

Now to Mayor Burton. So, these utility and service boards—can you just elaborate on—first of all, thanks for this reading homework; I appreciate it. We don't have enough reading, but that one looks interesting. If you could just elaborate on your idea for utility and service boards.

Mr. Rob Burton: Well, thank you for the question. I think you'll find that Dr. Spicer is a compelling writer and I believe you won't be able to put it down, it's that good.

Service boards and utilities are not my idea. Those are well-established ways of delivering services over broad areas to create efficiencies for the residents who have to beg for them. I make no claim of invention here. I'm only reporting that other ways exist.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. And then you mentioned that maybe this committee creates criteria to allow for the separation. If you were on this committee, what would your criteria be?

Mr. Rob Burton: Well, let's go back to the formation of the Halton region. Oakville was a single-tier city with everything a single-tier city has. It had a population of just more than 61,000 people. It was married together with Burlington for the purpose of helping the rural settlements of Milton and Georgetown urbanize.

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

Mr. Rob Burton: They were 5,000 each. Halton Hills is now 65,000; they're bigger than we were when we were tasked with being their foster parent.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. Now, to the government side. MPP Coe, please start.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Mayor Burton and Regional Chair Henry, for your delegations. I appreciate it.

Full disclosure: I served for seven years on the Durham regional council and six on the local Whitby town council. For 11 of those 13 years, I was the chair of the planning and development committee at the region and chair for committees at the regional level.

Regional Chair Henry, for the committee to hear that there is a regional review every 11 years in terms of representation and the number of people for councillors per the eight municipalities leads me to another question. In the process of doing that, to what extent are there responsibilities and services that could be modified or combined—moved from one level of local government to another, or integrated among existing local governments to support the construction of new homes and the provision of effect of local governance?

Now, I ask that question because you know, from time to time, there are discussions that come up at regional council with respect to duplication or apparent duplication of planning and development—eight separate planning and development departments in each municipality, plus the region's planning and development department, combined with fire service.

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Can you address that question, about what level of discussion takes place at region and how often about respon-

sibilities and services that could be modified or combined, or moved from one level of local government to another or integrated?

Mr. John Henry: In the three northern municipalities, we supply the support under planning, economic development, legal and IT now, because they're not able to effectively afford it on their own, and we do an amazing job.

In the south, I think what happens is continuous improvement. I come from the private sector, as you know, and continuous improvement has been something that the region has adopted for a very long period of time. I'll give you one example. There was a decision to build another regional building on the lands that we're located on right now, at 605 Rossland Road East. In the first term of council, four years ago, in the first year, we actually decided to opt out of building any more large buildings, and opted into building a work environment and converting our regional headquarters into more of a Google-style work environment—if you're familiar with how Google's employees come to work, with places to work, touchdown stations and meeting rooms—and we've been very effective.

We continually look at every opportunity that we can with all of our municipalities to find improvements. We do that every year through the budget process. We do it in the committee structure. In fact, last Thursday, the works committee was touring facilities in Beaverton, Scugog, Port Perry and Uxbridge, looking at ways that we could possibly improve how we manage drinking water and waste water.

So using a continuous model of business and being open to change—because change is a good thing, if you manage it well. You're seeing the successes that we're having now. And to prove that, you just have to drive along the 407 corridor or the 412 in Whitby, to see the growth that's here. The businesses that are coming into the region are coming here because we've made it easy for them to do business, and I'm proud of the track record we have.

A long answer, but I hope that's the answer you're looking for.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Regional Chair.

Chair, through you to my colleagues, please.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thanks to the mayor and Mr. John for presenting to us today. As I'm not the most expert in municipal governance, just an observer, I can see the two sides of the story are a little bit different. I agree with Mayor Rob in regards to choosing the right time to do the right thing and for the right reason. Definitely, it's a dynamic. We understand that.

My question to Mayor Rob: Given all those presentations we've seen, what would be one element you see as the most challenging, trying to execute with regional governance in regards to the provincial mandates to the cities or municipalities? What is the biggest challenge, if we choose one?

Mr. Rob Burton: I will answer, hoping I understand the question correctly. In 2006, the growth plan for the greater Toronto area designated 26 urban growth centres, and one of them was designated around the Oakville GO station. It has been in the legislation and it has been in the official plans of Oakville and Halton since that time. I recently was assured by the region of Halton that if nothing goes wrong, servicing to permit that urban growth centre to finally start building will be ready by 2026.

I created a television network in less than five years, and it seems to me that a few pipes ought to be able to be built in less than 20 years. So the challenge is to get people to get things done. My lifelong experience has been: When you run your own show and you're the master of your own house, you can get more done. I hope that answers your—

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Yes. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Pang, please go ahead. And one minute left.

Mr. Billy Pang: Okay.

This is an easy question. So, you want to change; you don't want to change: Am I correct?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Billy Pang: What are the disadvantages that you want to change and you don't want to change?

Mr. Rob Burton: What are the—

Mr. Billy Pang: Disadvantages. You talked about your advantages to change or not to change, right?

Mr. Rob Burton: There are no disadvantages to change for us.

Mr. Billy Pang: No?

Mr. Rob Burton: No.

Mr. Billy Pang: Okay.

Mr. John Henry: For us, adopting change within a regional government just improves how we work as a community. We are open to those conversations that you need to have. Each one of the mayors has a voice. Their councils have a voice at the table, and we're able to work together to do great things.

I spoke to you, just not too long ago, on the region and how we utilized our talents along with the province, the mayor of Oshawa and the mayor of Clarington to create a plan for GO train extensions—not only in Durham; this plan will be used across the entire GO network. It was done through a cooperated effort, supported by a regional council that will benefit the entire GO train lines going in every community. I'm proud of that.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We'll now move over to the last round for the official opposition.

MPP Burch, seven and a half minutes. Please start.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Mayor Burton, I have always been fascinated by the idea of service boards and utility boards. In your view, is that a model that could replace regional government when it comes to issues like conservation, environmental protection, protecting farmlands, things that often have to happen regionally?

Mr. Rob Burton: Yes. In fact, Conservation Halton has those duties in the region of Halton. That's an arm's-length

organization. It's set up by the province through its own legislation. There is no conflict there whatsoever.

For the rest of your question, I want to refer you to Dr. Spicer's paper at the bottom of page 17 where he quotes former Minister McKeough as saying, "He contends that larger and more flexible upper-tier institutions"—not governance, institutions—"should be in place to capture much of the greater Toronto area, eliminating the regional governments, which he sees as being far too small to continue to provide value for residents."

These things that I grant and admit must be done at a large scale and that I think could be done by utilities and boards of directors are things like transportation, water and waste water, social housing. All of these things are suffering from probably a lack of scale at the regional level. What I like about former Minister McKeough's vision is that he said you're never done; you have to always be moving forward, innovating and examining where you are, and thinking is there a better way.

Mr. Jeff Burch: In that model, how would they be accountable towards citizens if there were not elected people that they reported to?

Mr. Rob Burton: The shared services model includes the regional police services, let me remind you. The province appoints some members. The region appoints some members. One member chosen by the region has to be a non-politician, not a member of council. For these super large institutions, like for the provision of water and waste water, I don't know that they need to be political. I don't understand why it isn't a technical issue, like Hydro One or OPG.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you.

You kind of work along the same lines, Mayor Henry. Do you see having elected representatives at a regional level as something that's necessary if folks are going to be accountable to the citizens who are paying their taxes for those services? Do you think there needs to be a democratically accountable body in charge of those things?

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Mr. John Henry: Absolutely. On all of our committees at the region, we have members of regional council representation—including, we have a municipal service corporation; it's called Durham OneNet. We're running fibre through our region, delivering broadband to all of our communities, especially the rural communities that wouldn't have been serviced by one of the major players. I'm really proud of that. I am the chair of that committee. I am the only elected official on that committee. It's made up with public representation, as well, and our CAO.

You asked a very interesting question related to transit. We are the only region in all of Ontario, and maybe all of Canada, where every resident in Durham region, no matter where they live, has access to transit through our On Demand app. It is a great story. It has been recognized by the Ministry of Transportation here. I'm really proud of the work that our staff has done. No matter where you live in Durham region, you can pick up the phone, and you'll have somebody come to your door and either take you to where you're going in the rural communities or take you

to a place where you can get a bus down to one of the five major communities.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to ask about economic development and your economic development officers. In Niagara, it has always fascinated me that there are economic development officers at both the region and the lower tiers—and then some lower-tier municipalities can afford one; some can't, so they depend more on the region. There's always this attitude that the municipalities compete with each other; it's usually the politicians who are competing with each other. The economic development officers themselves usually get along really well and work together really well.

How does it work in Durham? Do you see regional government as being necessary to have a coordinated economic development approach, or can it work just as well in single-tier municipalities?

Mr. John Henry: One of Durham's largest businesses, our agricultural building—we have a rural economic development officer who supports our three northern municipalities. We have economic support for all the northern municipalities. We have an economic development office that works in partnership with the five lakeshore communities. It's a relationship that works incredibly well. They are very good at bringing businesses to their communities, and we're very good at making sure that the services they need are brought to the lands that need to be serviced.

For example, I mentioned the parent company Wonder Bread, which has moved into Pickering; Kubota—the work that we do with General Motors; the work that we're doing in the nuclear area, led by Mayor Foster, the mayor of Clarington, who is renowned for communities that have nuclear support—or as nuclear host communities. For what we do, it works well together. Of course, there's competition between mayors, but in the end—it's all working together to make sure that the services are needed.

Businesses move to only where the land is located. For example, Kubota and SKF could only move into an area where there was enough land along the 407 corridor to meet their needs, which meant that the entire region works together to make sure that the servicing for those lands was in place.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: What would you like to see come out of this committee?

Mr. John Henry: Any concept of improving what we do at the region, we would look upon as support. But there again, every community is different. The region of Durham works well together. I'm here as the regional chair; I'm not here with any mayors in opposition to my comments today. I think we have something that is not only good for our region, but it's also good for the economy of the province of Ontario, and I'm proud of what we're able to do.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahan: It's fascinating to hear the different stories from different areas. And it really does seem like Durham is happily married, basically—if that's the analogy that Mayor Burton brought in. That's fantastic.

I'm just going to ask you each a question, and you can show us how you can share, because I only have four and a half minutes. If you could each give the committee one piece of advice that you would recommend as we study this regional governance—so you get about two minutes each, or less.

Mr. John Henry: I'll go first. I think what you have to do is you have to look at each region individually and you have to see what works. In Durham region, everything that we're doing is working. You can see that in the investment that has been made. The region has been a partner in our communities. Not only do we invest in universities and colleges and hospitals as a partner, but we are also invested in making sure that the new urban park in Uxbridge works for the province. We have 580 hectares of land that will be coming into that park when it is built, and I'm proud of that. I'm really proud of the fact that you don't see our names in the newspaper, that we're working together and doing great things.

All that I would ask is that you look at each region individually, and the ones that work, come up and help us. If we can make them better, I'm open to that conversation. And if there's changes needed in other communities, that's for those communities to make that decision.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahan: Thank you.

Mr. Rob Burton: Thank you for the question. Your question inspires this observation: Because mayors all work together, we have a well-established organization—more than one well-established organization for mayors to work together, only one of which is the Ontario's Big City Mayors caucus—but we also have the single-tier mayors and chairs, which gets a little confusing, I guess. And we have the Ontario Auto Mayors and we have the mayors for nuclear technology—actually, I helped found that.

But if you look at the evolution of economic development beyond the local to the regional level, you need to notice that together we all co-operated to create Global Toronto, which is a mega economic development operation that expands on a much farther geography than merely a region or any particular city. I think this is an example of what former minister McKeough was talking about when he said we have to always be ready to recognize when it's time to evolve into something bigger and what goes where and to always be examining where the best place is to do things.

So my advice would be to please focus on telling us how we will know when a region is ready to evolve. If you don't agree with my suggestion that my region is ready to evolve, please let us know when we will know and how we will know when we've reached that point, because I do believe that as Canada and Ontario and Halton and Oakville continue to grow, evolution is going to be important.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahan: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'll start with the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Kusendova-Bashta.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much to both Mayor Burton and Chair Henry. I think it's quite

fascinating to have two municipal politicians arguing opposite points but doing it with so much passion, conviction and eloquence.

My first question will be to Mayor Burton. Thank you very much for bringing this study to us. I myself am doing my master's. I really love to read studies, so that's wonderful. I think the historical context for why the regions were created is very important. It was done by Premier Robarts, who was the Premier from 1961 to 1971. At the time he argued that "the regions, he believed, would provide a suitable scale to be responsive and allow for citizen participation and democratic control..." He said that in 1968.

Here on page 13, we have the "Implementation of Regional Government in Ontario" little table and from just a glance I see that in Ottawa-Carleton it was implemented in 1969, in Niagara in 1970 and in my region of Peel in 1973. So that would have been, what, 50 to 55 years ago.

In my own region of Peel, we've heard both sides of the argument, but the main argument for separation was that the regions served their purpose. It was for the more developed municipalities to pay for the growth and development of the less developed municipalities, which was true for the city of Mississauga—to allow and to help for the growth of the city of Brampton and Caledon as well.

But, would you say, Mayor, now 55 years later, that regions are creatures of the past, that they may be archaic and they have served their purpose? As you mentioned, evolution is important, and change is good, so would you say it's time—and that's why we're doing this today, this exercise. What would you say about that?

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Mr. Rob Burton: My submission is that in my region, it is time for evolution.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Very good.

And so, in terms of, for example, housing starts: In my region of Peel, because there is a duplication in approvals—and housing starts, I think, is probably the impetus, why we're doing the work we're doing—it can take up to 15 years to get shovels in the ground.

Is that the case in your municipality: that there is duplication in approvals, which delays housing starts?

Mr. Rob Burton: Well, I know that I can point to many examples. My favourite one is that, in my urban growth centre, I have 8,000 or 9,000 housing units marking time because the infrastructure is not there yet, and I could've done it.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: But is it because infrastructure is not there yet or is it because the two-tier system, which requires approvals first at the municipal level then at the regional level, is slowing down just the approval process?

Mr. Rob Burton: Yes, we have to go up to the region and we have to compete with each other for scarce dollars, and we have to basically wait our turn.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you. And also, congratulations for—back in 2020, when we announced the electric vehicle grant, our government invested over \$300 million. How is that going at Ford Canada?

Mr. Rob Burton: Well, it transformed Ford Canada and the other automakers as well. I am saving my nickels right now to make sure that I can buy the first EV that's going to come off the line in 2025—currently that's the estimate. And I've been told—it's not official—it will be a brand new EV version of the Explorer. So I'll turn in my Edge for an EV Explorer.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Wonderful. Thank you so much.

And to you, Chair Henry—so, it's really good to hear that your municipality is working very well. You have the eight mayors who all signed a letter. But do you think that, perhaps one day, when you're no longer there and the other mayors are no longer there, that could change?

Mr. John Henry: Well, change is constant. I wish I could look into the future, but I'm not able to. But I can tell you, I'm an elected chair in Durham region, which means that the chair—and I can tell you, it is the hardest campaign you ever want to run, trying to canvass 2,500 square kilometres—but we're able to do things that small communities would not.

For example, you would never be able to get fibre into our northern communities without a municipal service incorporation, and I'm really proud of that. I'm really proud that our first report that comes to regional council will be this week on Thursday on how well we're doing with that plan. But we're doing things that I'm proud—because in Durham, we have Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax, Pickering, and Clarington and Bowmanville is the centre. But they have countless small hamlets throughout the region, yet the city of Toronto would fit in the municipality of Clarington—the entire city of Toronto.

And getting, just broadband, water and sewer out to those areas—you know, Mayor Burton has a point that water and sewer is a challenge, but in Durham, we plan it. We work together to know where the development it is so we can get the service to where it needs to be.

And I'm really proud of the fact that regional council work together to add 9,100 acres of additional growth space into our municipal comprehensive review that is under review by the province right now, that will allow us to have more growth in Durham region and still be that region that delivers—for example, if you had eggs this morning, chances are, they came from Durham and we continue to have the largest apple grower in Canada. With the new apple that was developed, Snowflake—it was in the news yesterday—there's a lot of great things happening in Durham.

We're very different than our communities to the west, and whatever they want to do and where they're going is fine, but Durham is very different; 2,500 square kilometres and a lot of that being rural are very hard to manage by a small group of people, and I'm proud of that.

We run waste water treatment plants on Lake Simcoe—

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

Mr. John Henry: But we also run community wells—very specialized technology that—those communities would never be able to afford that type of employee and we provide that, so the water rate in Durham is the same for everywhere.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: No, that's quite fascinating. I think one of the arguments that Premier Robarts made back in 1968 is that urban areas should not be separated from the rural areas surrounding them, and I think you spoke to that. That's why it's really important that our government takes a case-by-case approach, and where things are working, let's consider that, and where things have evolved and are more urban areas, to not—sorry.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You've got 15 seconds.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Sorry; I just lost my train of thought there.

Basically, we're doing this review and consulting with our partners to see what your opinions are, and then we will take that into consideration.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much for coming this morning—and the presentations. It was very informative and very enjoyable, actually.

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes, if I can say, on behalf of the committee, it was well done, so—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes?

Mr. John Henry: Madam Chair, a copy of my notes?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sure, I think that would be fine. The Clerk will collect them in a few minutes.

I see no further committee business. The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

The committee adjourned at 1156.

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