

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

HE-44

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

Regional governance

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament  
Tuesday 16 January 2024

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Chair: Laurie Scott  
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

HE-44

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

Gouvernance régionale

1<sup>re</sup> session  
43<sup>e</sup> législature  
Mardi 16 janvier 2024

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Présidente : Laurie Scott  
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Tuesday 16 January 2024

Mardi 16 janvier 2024

*The committee met at 1000 in the Ajax Convention Centre, Ajax.*

**REGIONAL GOVERNANCE**

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Good morning, everyone. Committee is about to start. We are here today for the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, and we'll now come to order.

We are meeting in Ajax to conduct public hearings on the study of regional governance. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording. Please wait until you are recognized before you start speaking. As always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we begin?

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 questions 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 members of the committee. Again, are there any questions?

**MUNICIPALITY OF CLARINGTON  
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF DURHAM  
TOWN OF WHITBY**

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** I would like to call up the first three presenters: the municipality of Clarington, come to the presenting table; the regional municipality of Durham; and the town of Whitby. Those are our first three presenters.

We'll just follow the agenda according to—the municipality of Clarington, regional municipality of Durham and then the town of Whitby to present. You have seven minutes. We'll start with the first presenter, but I also remind you that the legislative broadcasting staff will be working our microphones, so there's no need to press the buttons. It's less confusion on all of us when we're speaking, so please adhere to that.

We'll start with our first presenter, the municipality of Clarington.

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** Madam Chair, thank you. Had I known I was going to be the first one speaking, I might have had a completely different set of notes in front of me. I'm kidding, of course—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Could I just quickly ask you to state your name?

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** I am doing that right this moment. I am Adrian Foster. I am the mayor of the municipality of Clarington. I've been the mayor of the municipality of Clarington and I've served in a variety of roles at Durham region since 2010. I am pleased to be here today to speak to the standing committee on behalf of Clarington and Durham region.

Clarington is the easternmost part of Durham region, which serves as the eastern gateway to the greater Toronto area. We are a proud nuclear host community—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Sorry. I just should clarify that if you can speak directly into the mike—

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** I will do so.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** I would really appreciate that. And then, I will also give a 30-second warning before your seven-minute presentation ends. I'll give you a little extra time because I interrupted you.

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** Alrighty. I will start where I stopped and suggest that Clarington is a proud nuclear host community to OPG's Darlington nuclear plant. Darlington generates about 20% of the power for all of Ontario, providing safe, clean, reliable and low-cost electricity. Our green energy sector is growing with the addition of four small modular reactors. That work being done at Darlington is creating about \$100 billion worth of GDP, most of that to the benefit of Ontarians. Clarington is deeply and actively engaged on this important file and is working on local, national and international stages to support it.

Geographically, we are 610 square kilometres and are the largest municipality by landmass in the region of Durham. For comparison purposes, Clarington has roughly the same geographic footprint as Toronto. We are a diverse mix of urban and rural communities, home to about 107,000 people. Our population is expected to more than double by 2051. It would be an understatement to say that Clarington has already seen significant growth, and we are at the forefront of much, much more. For my council colleagues and I, it is critical that we work with the local community,

Clarington staff and the region to responsibly navigate and manage that growth and change.

I'm proud to say that Clarington has met its 2023 target for new housing starts with the development of 953 new units. This is our part of the province's goal of 1.5 million homes. To continue to deliver on that commitment, we need focus, alignment and appropriate resource allocation to deliver the infrastructure needed to meet the province's housing needs. My staff and Durham region staff need clarity and timelines for enactment of Bill 23. Without knowing when or where Bill 23 is headed, we cannot prepare work plans for 2024. We need to be able to provide that same clarity to the development community. Those are the folks that actually build the houses. They need those assurances to pull the permits and put the houses up. At the same time, a use-it-or-lose-it approach to permitting should be considered further.

The region is a great partner and serves a critical role in enhancing prosperity across the lower-tier communities. The concept of a city of Durham is not fiscally responsible and would not be desired by our residents. It would run counter to much of the great work that has and will continue to be done as a result of our partnership. Unlike several other spots in Ontario, there is a conspicuous lack of controversy surrounding governance in Durham. The model largely is working.

For example, we are working closely with the region to advance the development of the future Lakeshore East GO extension to Bowmanville. Clarington residents are eagerly awaiting the planned Bowmanville GO station, which will be the final stop on the 20-kilometre extension. The region led the work to create the station contribution fee, in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Metrolinx. This tool will help advance new GO stations in both Clarington and Oshawa. The innovative approach of the Durham region transit-oriented development office supports transit-oriented community development across municipal borders. Clarington is creating the secondary plans that will ensure density around the new GO train stations. The new homes will be close to transit and other amenities in Bowmanville and Courtice.

For context, those two secondary plans are part of the 12 secondary plans that Clarington staff have under way. The work on those plans, along with significant urban boundary expansions, was being undertaken well before the housing pledge. Clarington has understood the need for growth for several years and has been preparing for it.

Clarington is key to the growth and economic success of Durham region over the next several decades, and it will take a continued and strong partnership between local and regional governments to capitalize on that growth. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. It is a pleasure to see you all.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you so much for your presentation, Mayor Adrian Foster of Clarington.

Now we will move to the next presenter, regional municipality of Durham. Seven minutes, please, and I'll give you a 30-second remaining time—

**Mr. John Henry:** Good morning, committee members. I'm John Henry, regional chair and CEO of the regional municipality of Durham. I'm joined today by Elaine Baxter-Trahair, our regional CAO; Nancy Taylor, Durham's treasurer and the commissioner of finance; Brian Bridgeman, the commissioner of planning and economic development; and also we have Mayor Schummer, Mayor Barton, Councillor Drodge, Mayor Foster, Mayor Roy and Mayor Ashe in the room.

I want to thank you for taking the time to come to Durham region and to allow our unique local perspective to be heard. Today you're seeing just a small piece of the largest region in the greater Golden Horseshoe. I'd also like to thank you for the opportunity to speak for a second time on this very important topic. I'd like to use this time to provide more detail on the benefits that regional governance models bring to advancing our shared priorities. Specifically, Elaine and I will highlight the efficiency of economies of scale and service delivery excellence that are realized in an effective two-tier system. Nancy is also with us today to be available to share insights into the strong financial practices that have enabled the Durham region to grow and build major infrastructure in a financially sustainable manner.

I was first elected as regional chair by the residents of Durham in 2018 and re-elected by voters in 2022. This follows eight years as the mayor of Oshawa. It is an absolute privilege to serve alongside Durham's mayors and councillors as part of Durham regional council, and I don't take this responsibility for granted. I work with my colleagues to meet the evolving needs of residents and businesses and to provide the required investments. I'm a proud grandfather and this new role has me thinking more than ever before about the next generation.

As elected officials, we have a responsibility to ensure that we have a plan for services and infrastructure that residents need today and in the future, and that these services and capital projects are delivered in the most efficient and sustainable way possible. That is what I believe Durham regional council does best.

Elaine?

**Ms. Elaine Baxter-Trahair:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. At the region, we approach service delivery and the location of major assets with a vision of most effectively meeting growth-related and existing needs across a large geographic area.

**1010**

When we look at the optimal placement of assets, we are looking to achieve a balance between environmental considerations, growth opportunities and the best value on investment, regardless of local boundaries. If you look at a map of Durham, some of our lakeshore communities are relatively narrow, and so the best location of a facility to serve the maximum number of people and get the best return on taxpayer money is achieved through a regional lens. For example, we have three interconnected water supply plants that provide safe drinking water to all five lakeshore communities. Likewise, three of Durham's water pollution control plants treat sanitary sewage across municipal boundaries.

Some of our assets require coordination beyond regional boundaries. For example, we are working on an expansion to the Duffins Creek water pollution control plant to service growth in both Durham and York regions. Likewise, the provision of effective and safe transportation infrastructure through public transit and roads is enabled by long-term planning across the region.

The region is entering into a period of significant capital investment to support our growth. We have a bold capital plan that is projecting average annual capital spending of \$1.1 billion over the next four years and \$9 billion over the next 10 years. This is a 65% increase over the previous four years. We are working closely with our local municipalities to support the provincial housing target of 84,000 new housing units across Durham's lakeshore communities. We are also planning to service a 9,100-acre urban boundary expansion in the region's official plan, which is currently with the province for review and approval.

Today, the region has delegated nearly all of its planning approval authority for development applications to area municipalities. In contrast, the region's new official plan serves as an overarching, integrated growth-management document to guide future development to 2051 and should not be eliminated by Bill 23. It is critical to ensuring efficient infrastructure planning and financing for services that cross municipal boundaries.

The region's capital budget planning process, which ensures infrastructure is planned, funded and delivered in a cost-effective manner, stems from the region's official plan. When we look at assets like a new water treatment plant that costs hundreds of millions of dollars and supports multiple municipalities, it is critical to use a broad lens. The region has a strong track record for effectively managing such projects, and we are one of only a handful of municipalities in Canada that continue to be awarded an AAA credit rating. This speaks to the effective long-term management of tax revenue, water and sewer user rates, and development charges, including reserve funds, to ensure infrastructure and services are in place. We time and size projects to ensure economies of scale so that projects can be delivered at the lowest cost, while also ensuring that capacity is in place when and where it is needed.

The potential for the region to upfront the costs of the four GO stations along the Lakeshore East GO extension is another example of major capital projects with region-wide benefit that would be much more challenging for any one single municipality to lead on their own, and we do thank the province for the legislation to enable us to advance that strategy.

On the operating side, service delivery is also much more cost-effective when provided on a regional scale. Paramedics, policing, transit, waste management, and homelessness and affordable housing are just some of the services that the region effectively delivers across eight municipalities. At an operational level, the region and Durham's local municipalities constantly collaborate on joint opportunities such as the Durham municipal insurance pool, road expansions, road maintenance and winter maintenance, coordinated construction of surface and underground

infrastructure, and road safety partnership initiatives, in order to achieve effective efficiencies and economies of scale in operations.

The region provides direct operational support to various local municipalities—

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

**Ms. Elaine Baxter-Trahair:** Okay—various local municipalities in other areas such as legal, IT, human resources and 311 to maximize efficiency. The region has made service excellence and value for money a key part of our core business, and we will be working together with our partners at local area municipalities to meet our common goals.

I thank you for hearing us this morning.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much for your presentation. I apologize to everyone for my lateness—but that's the weather.

We will now go on to the mayor of Whitby. Please, Your Worship, go ahead.

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** Good morning, Chair and committee members. I'm Elizabeth Roy, mayor of the town of Whitby and chair of the Durham region health and social services committee. I have served as a member of council in Whitby for 17 years and nine of those years with the region of Durham. I appreciate the standing committee giving me the opportunity to speak today about the regional government review.

The town of Whitby is located in the heart of Durham region. We are home to 143,000 people, and we are one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada, with our population forecasted in 2051 to be 245,000 people. It combines a welcoming, small-town atmosphere with the amenities of a large urban centre and boasts two vibrant downtowns. We are located along the shores of Lake Ontario and we are seeing exciting transformation starting at our waterfront.

As this is my first year as mayor, I prioritized community engagement on a new community strategic plan. Through this engagement, investment in the waterfront was identified as a resounding priority for residents. The town has been able to work with developers on a vision for the waterfront that sets the stage to meet the community's expectation for this incredible asset.

North Whitby is another area benefiting from growth, and town council recently approved a third major recreation centre for the town to meet the needs of residents in our [*inaudible*] Brooklin community.

Unlocking the lands along Highway 412 is another area where we are seeing major growth. Local and regional infrastructure has been and remains critical to realizing complete communities in these developments.

We have a strong partnership with the region, and I am happy to be here today in support of continued regional governance in Durham.

Today, I would like to highlight one particular area where I have seen the benefits of regional governance. The region is legislated by the province of Ontario as a service system manager for housing and homelessness. Through this the region plans, designs and manages the system to meet our commitment to support those who are homeless and those

who are at risk of becoming homeless. As we know, homelessness crosses municipal boundaries, and a regional service model offers clear benefits of larger system thinking on meeting the needs of vulnerable residents.

As the chair of the regional health and social services committee, and I've been on this committee for five years, I have seen the incredible power of community partners, service providers and community members coming together to support vulnerable residents. I have seen the power of innovating to achieve better and lasting outcomes. Sadly, I have also seen the devastating impacts of Canada's homelessness crisis. In Durham there was a 67% increase in homelessness from 2022 to 2023. In Whitby alone there are 32 unsheltered individuals. The system is operating at capacity, and people looking for a safe and warm place to spend the night are being turned away every night.

I am proud to say that this summer regional council approved the purchase of 1635 Dundas, a former long-term-care home, to meet immediate needs and enable innovative solutions. This isn't about warehousing people but about supporting people on their journey towards a positive path forward.

The first stage of work will include 45 shelter beds with wraparound services to support people so that they can be supported on site. It will be the only shelter in Durham where people can stay indoors all day, 24/7, to work towards their goals, be it employment, housing or mental wellness. We are already actively working with community partners on the life-changing supports that will be offered.

Phase 2 of the project will allow for even more opportunities along the housing continuum.

Like other projects of this nature, we do face a vocal localized response. It's easy to choose to not do the right thing and turn a blind eye in the face of such a localized response. The regional perspective enables bigger-picture reflection on the best path forward. I am happy to say that we were able to come to an agreement that satisfied Whitby town council that concerns raised in public consultation would be addressed by the region. I look forward to continuing to partner with the region as we work together to realize the full potential of the space.

I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to present to you, and I'd also like to give background on myself. I have 34 years of health care experience, and I will say that the role and the relationship, especially through the COVID time periods, working with health and local communities—it was a very vital time to have that relationship together.

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

We'll now go on to the official opposition for their first round of seven and a half minutes. MPP Burch, please start when you're ready.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you very much, Chair, and good morning. Thank you all for your presentations this morning.  
**1020**

I do have a few questions, hearing about Durham. It's not the same situation in every region of the province. You seem to have a very—everyone is very supportive of the two-tier system with regional government. We just did one

in Niagara, where I'm from. Things are a little more controversial there. I would say the majority of folks still appreciate the regional government, but there is a loud minority that have some concerns about duplication and coordination between the two levels, and there is some criticism from the business community. Whereas, with Durham, everything seems to be working quite well. I just wanted to delve into that a little further.

Just a question for Mayor Roy: With respect to homelessness, one of the issues, I know, in Niagara and some other regions is the coordination between the two tiers with respect to supporting the homeless population and with respect to things like encampments, for example, and sharing the information. How do you handle that successfully in Durham between the two levels?

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** Actually, this is a great question, because two years ago homelessness was in the town of Whitby. It was not one that we would have thought that today we'd be talking about to the extent we are. In my first year of being mayor for the town of Whitby, we have created a homelessness task force, which is in conjunction together with the region of Durham, the regional DRPS and also with our paramedic services, and also our bylaw and our senior staff. We have also created an encampment strategy that has been brought together with the relationships, together with the region of Durham.

Recently, in the past year—and next week, I am hosting a round table discussion about food banks, and this has all been in conjunction between the town of Whitby and the region of Durham. The social services staff are being brought to the table to have the conversations with our food banks. Also, my last round table was with our churches and with our ministerial community. This is one where we had seen the resources of what we do at the town level and also at the regional level. It has now brought everybody together to give those supports.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** A lot of this success has to do with the relationships between politicians and staff at the two—

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** Politicians and staff, but also it's community building.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Okay. Thank you.

A question for Chair Henry: I heard you in Barrie—I was in Barrie—and your presentation there, as well. Mayor Foster brought up a use-it-or-lose-it approach to permitting, which is something that I've been pushing for a couple of years at the Legislature, and that's becoming even more of an issue now with building slowing down for economic reasons like interest rates and inflation. But also, land banking is an obvious problem, especially as the economy changes.

How useful across the region would a use-it-or-lose-it approach be when developers are using up time and resources of municipalities going through the system? The government has put time limits on municipalities to perform. Should we not have time limits on builders and developers, as well, so that they have to use their permits and get shovels in the ground at a certain period of time?

**Mr. John Henry:** That's a very interesting question because, as you are aware, once it's passed, the allocation of water and sewer is given to that particular developer and



that takes it out of the system. Some developers, not just throughout the region, have had the go-ahead to just simply be ready to draw building permits. It happens, so it does take capacity out of the system and it does create a challenge.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Is that a concern with municipalities across the region with respect to Bill 23? Because we know that the \$1.2-billion fund, to get that money back that was lost with Bill 23—to access those funds, the criteria is, I think, foundations poured, which the municipality has no control over. How much of a concern is that across the region?

**Mr. John Henry:** Bill 23 is a concern because it has long-term implications for the region of Durham. Over 10 years, the estimated cost to the region is about \$800 million, so we are working to make sure that the messaging gives an understanding of how Bill 23 will affect not only our community, but other communities across the province. It's an ongoing conversation, but it is concerning.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Mayor Foster, you brought this up specifically. Did you want to comment on the use-it-or-lose-it policy?

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** MPP Burch, thank you ever so much for bringing that up. It's a huge issue. Clarington, at various stages of readiness for permits—without having numbers in front me, I believe we've got about 6,000. So if you look at the percentage of total units, the Ontario Big City Mayors have identified a significant number of permits that could be pulled now, today.

Clarington is very likely to move unilaterally. I don't want to say we're tired of waiting, but we think that we can come up with a solution around site plans that—if you are coming to us, if you are forcing our staff to work on a file that you have no intention of moving forward with, it's stopping our staff from moving ahead with development proposals for developers that want to put shovels in the ground.

It would be very interesting if the province collected a list—I'm not going to call them developers; they are likely more speculators—of companies that have permits ready to be pulled across the GTHA. And these are very frequently people who—we've changed the colour on the map, we've changed the zoning, tens of millions of dollars are created in wealth, and they simply flip it. And when they flip it, frequently the folks that actually do the development want to make changes and want to do something different, which just slows it down again. It's extremely frustrating.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you very much. And just back to the region of Durham—

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

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Maybe we can come back in the next round. But about the official plan in Bill 23 and the concerns: I just wanted to understand that a little bit more.

**Ms. Elaine Baxter-Trahair:** I think it's critically important, we believe, to plan major infrastructure, water, sewer, roads etc. on a regional scale. It's much more cost-efficient, and we are able to ensure that we are addressing any environmental concerns on the larger geographic area also. So we think that component of planning at a regional

level is very important to effectively planning our long-term, 10-year capital plan.

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

MPP Bowman for four and a half minutes: Please go ahead.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you to all the presenters for being here. And while I am from the city of Toronto, I do have family who live in Whitby and know that they really do enjoy living in the community and the waterfront that, Mayor, you talked about. I do spend some time here and always enjoy my time here, so I'm glad to be here.

All of you, it sounds like, are in favour of the current regional model. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about the views that you hear from your other municipal partners when you are having regional meetings. Are there issues, are there challenges, and if you could describe those? I'll give each of you a minute or so to answer.

**Mr. John Henry:** Just for clarification: Are you asking other regional governments or are you asking—

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** No, sorry, within Durham.

**Mr. John Henry:** Within the region of Durham. Okay.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Go ahead.

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** I would like to tell you that any relationship isn't perfect. Relationships change and evolve, and I would suggest, over the last couple of years, some of the things that Durham region has undertaken on behalf of all of the municipalities is evolution in the right way.

I fear, and whether this fear comes true or not, that as you have monetized development—so we get money for concrete in the ground that we don't control. I fear that the lower-tier municipalities are going to find themselves in competition, one with another, for the infrastructure required to make that development.

If we are doing that individually, if Mayor Roy needs to worry about Whitby, as much as I hope she likes me and I like her—at least at the regional level, overlooking development across a greater area in a far more fiscally prudent manner, that makes sense. But I am worried about the potential for competition.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Okay. Thank you. Mayor Roy?

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** My comment would be that we're stronger together and that the strength of us working cohesively together—and yes, we do have differences of opinion. It is that working relationship that helps us to build our community as a whole and to have that complete community.

The other is that, yes, there are going to be the naysayers, just as a whole, who—it's the lack of understanding. Maybe that's the potential of where, especially with a two-tier system—when you're out in election time, for instance, and you're talking to residents: “I don't understand what the role is of a regional politician versus a local politician.” It's very much that disconnect there that ends up where you have a little bit of a controversy where the belief is that there is all this duplication, especially within government.

1030

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you.

**Mr. John Henry:** And as the chair of the region, I would not be telling the truth if I said—it wasn't always rainbows and unicorns. But I will tell you that I'm proud to work with the eight mayors of the region of Durham to become—and we are—the fastest-growing region in the province of Ontario in attracting industry and business from around the world.

But really, I'm going to use an example right now. Some of you have a glass of water—and this is why regional government works: The price of that glass of water in Ajax is the same price as that glass of water anywhere else in the region of Durham. It doesn't matter, whether you're operating a community well program, a water treatment plant, sewage lagoons, or what we do with our waterfront and waste water down here in our plants.

That's why regional government works today, and it works in partnership. Our CAO meets with the CAOs of all the municipalities. The mayors will chat with me when they have particular challenges. It's not perfect, but I think we're probably 90% in working together and 10% challenges.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** How much time, Chair?

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

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Okay.

Could you just spend 30 seconds on talking about what one of the biggest challenges is that you do end up talking about at the regional council?

**Mr. John Henry:** Well, the challenge is trying to manage a region of 2,500 square kilometres and making sure that we distribute our resources equally and fairly across the region. Every municipality is looking to do something, and our job at the region, especially when it comes to building roads and delivering those services—we try to do it equally and fairly, and that's what long-term planning does. It allows us to meet the needs of all eight municipalities.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you.

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

We'll now move over to the government's side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Rae, please go ahead.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to the presenters. My apologies for being late; I was with the Chair. It is winter, finally—so dealing with the 401 in January. But yes, thank you very much for presenting.

It's nice to see you, Chair Henry, again, as well. I've seen you a few times now in front of this committee on a variety of issues and I just want to say, on behalf of the government, it was nice working with the region on our bill for transit-oriented communities. I know Durham was really a leader in that aspect and was really pushing those changes, and we appreciated your advice on that.

This committee, obviously, was tasked by Minister Calandra to look at regional governance: seven regions, some of the fastest-growing regions in Ontario. We've been on a tour, as my colleague MPP Burch mentioned, last week and this week and obviously before the break as well, up into Barrie. We'll continue to do so as well. I know there's lots of interest in the regions that we go to and the committee is really focused on ensuring that re-

gional government and the lower tiers are, obviously, getting housing built and working with the province on that, which I know all of you are, and also housing-enabling infrastructure, which comes up very often as these meetings, and then obviously, as well, ensuring that all of us are providing efficient services and effective services to the people we serve. As I like to say often at these hearings, there's only one taxpayer in the province of Ontario, who we all serve.

I know it was brought up in Mayor Foster's remarks around "use it or lose it." I was just wondering if Mayor Roy would be able to just elaborate on whether or not you support a use-it-or-lose-it policy.

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** I absolutely do, because we have 9,000 approved that could be built today. We could issue building permits today. That's where we—like, if you're not going to use it, you should lose it. And to be able to meet the targets—that ability to meet the targets is our limiting factor because there's no moving forward on it.

I'm going to comment just a little bit further about meeting that target and some of the limitations that have been in places. It's about the providing of the infrastructure, and that's power. In Brooklin, where we have 11,000 units that do require electricity, unfortunately that's our limiting factor right now that we're facing.

We are working with the government, we are working with you, and we do appreciate that. But it is a struggle.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Yes, it's a unique challenge. We had, at one point in Ontario's history, too much power and now we need more power, whether it's for residential, obviously, but also for many businesses that we're attracting to the province. It's one of the key things I hear about in my part of the province as well.

Obviously, Bill 23 has come up a couple of times. It has come up at the hearings. I know the minister is working with the Ontario Big City Mayors, AMO and ROMA—which is next week—around how that is impacting the finances of the municipalities. I know myself and the associate minister meet often with the municipalities around that, and we'll continue to work with you in understanding how those changes may affect your finances. I know our definition of affordable housing did help alleviate some of those concerns, and pegging it to income as well, which we heard from AMO and also, obviously, those service managers in the sector.

Bill 23 did change some things around appeals with that, on a site plan or a minor variance, as you all well know. I was just wondering, Mayor Foster, if you could—I'm just wanting your thoughts on whether or not the government should look at third-party appeals.

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** I'll use the American model: I'm going to plead the fifth on that. I'd like to tell you that I'm well versed on the pros and cons; I am not. Any answer I would give you would just be dodging the question.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** That's fine. No one had to swear before the committee, so you can do that.

Mayor Roy?

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** Again, I would say it's a difficult one. Bill 23, as it has transitioned since October 25 and

moving forward, the impact—as we're all going through our budgets collectively together across this province in the discussions with Ontario Big City Mayors, this hasn't been one that has been put in front of us as a possibility to move forward. I'd be interested more to hear about it.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** And Chair Henry?

**Mr. John Henry:** I agree with both the mayors. The challenge is often the parameters around what's trying to be done. Often, sometimes, it can be more confusing and not helpful. So I absolutely agree with what Mayor Roy and Mayor Foster said.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** How much time left, Chair?

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Two minutes.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** I defer my time to the great member from Whitby.

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thanks very much. And good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that.

Mayor Roy, I'm back on the homelessness prevention. You will know, and all of your colleagues will know, that the region received—I'm just looking at the news release last year—\$18.6 million annually through the Homelessness Prevention Program. That's more than \$7.1 million or 62% over the last year. Can you speak, in your role as chair of the health and social services committee, about the effect of that level of investment in the region of Durham and how it's impacting the other six municipalities that are not here today? Go ahead, please.

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** While the money has been presented and working together for homelessness is an all-levels-of-government solution—the impact of support is much appreciated, but as you know, there needs to be more, not only from the provincial government but also from the federal government. We have expanded our services across the region. Homelessness, particularly, as I stated, does not have any municipal boundaries, but we are looking at the areas across our community as to where those needs are.

As of recent, even with our warming centres that have been opened up—you'll even see in the basement of our regional facility, we have a warming centre within the town of Whitby, because that's where the regional building is located. We are seeing the expansion within these services in Oshawa for the supports, and the recent announcement that was made, especially in partnership with the Refuge, to have housing put into place with Oshawa for teenagers. It's a facility located on Simcoe.

The expansion for the support for homelessness—

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

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** —is one that needs to be broadened more, but we're trying to do with what we have. We need more, but the support is much appreciated.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Mayor Roy.

Time check, please.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** It's 10 seconds.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Well, thanks very much. My colleague Patrice Barnes will be part of the second round.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** We'll move right to the second round and go to MPP Burch for your next round of seven and a half minutes, please.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you, Chair. Before handing things over to my colleague, I just wanted to go back to my former question to the region with respect to the official plan and Bill 23. I just heard that there was some concern about, with the rollout of Bill 23, how that would affect the official plan or the process. Can you expand on that?

1040

**Ms. Elaine Baxter-Trahair:** Yes. I do have our commissioner of planning here also. Brian, would you like to come up in case there's anything to add?

One of the key benefits of the regional official plan is it allows us to plan major infrastructure on a regional basis. As you've heard, the region is 2,500 square kilometres. It's a lot of ground to cover. By planning on a regional level, we're able to ensure that we can address broader environmental concerns. We can be fiscally responsible and ensure that we're capitalizing on economies of scale. For example, we don't have nine water pollution control plants; we have three. That kind of planning component of the official plan for the region is critical going forward.

Other aspects that can be downloaded, we're happy to accommodate, but we feel it's pretty critical to be planning major infrastructure on a regional basis so that you're not duplicating facilities or in-the-ground infrastructure.

I'll just look at Brian in case I've missed anything.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** You get a passing grade.

Thanks. I'll hand things over to my colleague.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Armstrong, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Thank you very much. Housing has been, I think, at the top of my mind since I've been elected. And it's not just housing for people who can purchase homes, but as we've talked about today, it's housing for all demographics. I think governments over the years have failed and neglected to include housing so everyone would be housed. I think this is why we're in a crisis homelessness situation in all of Ontario.

I'll read from my phone here about London specifically: “The triple-headed crisis of addiction, homelessness and mental illness that is afflicting so many Canadian cities has come to London with a vengeance. The homeless population has reached 2,000, double the figure before the pandemic. Around 250 people have died on London's streets over the past four years.” This is probably not a new story to many of the municipalities that present to committees, but it's a very serious issue.

It's great the government is wanting to build homes faster. I think everybody wants to make sure that hard-working people can afford to buy a home and our children can move out of our homes and purchase their first starter homes. That's very, very important. But I want to stress what I think is really missing, is that we have to make sure we build for all populations. Part of that is also the homes that are geared to income and co-operatives. It's a mix of housing that's really needed throughout the province, and I think over the decades—it doesn't matter to me which

government it was; it hasn't met those targets to continually avoid and plan for the future about what housing looks like for everyone.

Health care is one of the pieces that has been identified as to why people are homeless. I want to thank Mayor Roy for all her past work in the health care field and sector, because I know it's not an easy thing to be on the front lines to look after the most vulnerable when they're in their time of need in health care.

You talked about your health care hubs in London. The mayor has taken an initiative because of the crisis in London—maybe you've heard about it. It was modelled after the city of Kingston because they initiated it. Those hubs are very important.

What I find, in a good way—it's a good step forward—but also concerning, is that we continually create temporary measures that are supposed to help solve homelessness, but they become permanent. We all know there's a cost to homelessness, first for the people who are experiencing it—very grave health concerns, mental health, addictions—and then also a dollar cost to governments to continually support people who live in homeless situations. Ideally, I'd love to see all people have housing.

On top of that, the needs have been complex where it's not just the housing that you want someone to live in, that home first, but then supports around that to keep them at home. So now we've added to the complexity of when people get homes and how to keep them housed, right? It's all changed.

I want to ask Mayor Roy, because you had mentioned that new initiative that's happening: If the government decides to proceed in dissolving regional governments, how will that affect that plan that you have? And what are some of the costs that you—we know tax costs will go up. We've heard about the Peel dissolution. But also, the cost of delivering those services to the most vulnerable and then what that cost looks like to the municipalities and the regions if they were to force the dissolution—if that was a hypothetical question I were to put out.

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** I like the question very much.

First and foremost, the project would not have gone forward without regional government. The delivery of services that will be taking place within this facility—mental health is the biggest component for homelessness. Additionally, what needs to happen—and it's like how quickly an individual can become homeless. It is one of the supports to know a place to go. To bring in mental health supports, to bring in the ability to have job offerings, but also to have the ability of the health care component of it—it is all-inclusive together within this facility that is being orchestrated through the regional government.

There will be a shelter provider who will be working with our social services staff, but then also, through the facilitation of each partner that will be within this place—they will help to navigate and be able to have an individual to graduate, essentially, through, within this, because it's not just about the shelter; it's about transitional housing. It's about the ability, also, to potentially look at hospice care. Homelessness in hospice care is completely different

from hospice care that you and I would have to take advantage of. It's the potential also of looking at human trafficking and having that ability to give those supports because, in many cases, around the table, the individuals that need the support are needing all of the same support, and this will be housed in one centre.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I just want to quickly add: I watched a video recently about Finland and how they dealt with the housing situation. One of the key things is, there was no one on the street because they actually have people housed—in different forms, in different housing models. But I just want to end with—what they also mentioned in that video is that we need to have housing prevention because a lot of people can't afford their mortgage or afford the rent, and then we just have a cycle of homelessness. That was a key part in preventing homelessness in that video. So I encourage all my colleagues to watch it. It's very informative.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thanks so much.

Moving on to MPP Bowman for four and a half minutes. Please start.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you, Chair.

I would like to just talk a little bit more about the possibilities around efficiencies. So, certainly, you can imagine that there are rural residents who would say, "Well, I don't get the same services as cities get—for example, in transit, busses—and yet I pay the same amount," or it's based on the same kind of assessments etc. I guess one question would be, how do you respond to those residents, whether that's during election time or during conversations that you might have with them?

Secondly, when you think about the possibility of duplication amongst the levels—and you've talked a little bit about how you try to avoid that. For example, you picked the town of Ajax. You've got three local councillors, you've got three regional councillors, plus a mayor. Let's say a resident has an issue with garbage collection or street maintenance: Who do they call? Do they know who to call? Is it clear? Is the possibility there that they might call both, not knowing who, and therefore both people have to try to respond? There are some of those potential built-in inefficiencies, so I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about how you manage that, how you address it.

One mayor, the mayor of the township of Brock, Walter Schummer, in his written submission said that he would suggest that there would be some changes to the legislation to require measurements and assessments to be done on a regular basis to evaluate value for money etc. So, again, I'll just ask you three to take a minute or so to maybe just talk about that, starting with Mayor Roy maybe.

**Ms. Elizabeth Roy:** I'm happy to work with that, because our model is a bit different from the other municipalities within the region of Durham in that our regional councillors run at large. It can be trying at times, especially for residents, in terms of just the understanding of who to communicate with.

I've taken it upon myself with this term of council that—it's the partnership, the creation of teams, where a regional councillor is tied in together with a local councillor. So any

type of communication, and even in terms of our communication out to the residents of the community, you know your team, who this is and what that looks like, even on the website.

I know with Ajax—and that was commented about. Within Ajax, for instance, a regional councillor runs in a ward system. There's a bit of a difference of opinion as to what that looks like. I think it's easier on the residents if it's a ward system, rather than at large; it makes it very confusing. But how do we work that together, just for residents to understand and to work through? For instance, the comment was made about garbage. In the town of Whitby, we actually pick up our own garbage. We are not part of the regional plan. At one point in time, the town of Whitby did a review and has maintained that we still do our garbage.

**1050**

Are there other efficiencies that we potentially could look at? I do believe so, especially in areas like economic development. As a region as a whole, we could collectively together, through ec dev—we could be working as one unit, because already, as it is, they are working as one unit under the scope of the region of Durham.

I know that over the years, we even gave the attention to the northern needs, the rural needs, the agricultural needs as well, because that's a very large need within the region of Durham. I think that that central attention could be had there, which is the same thing with tourism. Tourism is also a big part of that, and that's one area where I think, effectively, we can bring resources together.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thirty-eight seconds.

**Mr. John Henry:** Really quickly: I'm an elected chair, so I canvass 2,500 square kilometres, and the issues that you hear are very different. How we deal with our residents—our 311 system works for all residents in Durham region, all municipalities.

The other part is our financial responsibilities to our residents. We're not allowed to run deficits, so the fact that we're able to operate and have an AAA credit rating shows how well we do within the boundaries of the region of Durham.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Great. Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** That's about it—three seconds.

We'll now move on to the government side for their seven and a half minutes. MPP Barnes, please go ahead.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Regional Chair Henry, I just wanted to get you to continue to expand on that, because when we're looking at regional council and the local level, we are operating at about 29 people at the regional level, and that doesn't include your local elected officials. So when we're talking about efficiencies and things that could be done better, could you just continue to expand on that a little bit? Because if you're looking at duplication, you pretty much have another full level of government—almost 30 people sitting—when you also have your local level. If you think there might be efficiencies if there is more of a tier where all the mayors come together and work through that process, without necessarily the addi-

tional regional pieces or—what would you think that would look like?

**Mr. John Henry:** I'm proud to say that Durham region is the only region, I believe, in Ontario that has a regional government rationalization within their bylaws. Every 12 years, we have to look at the makeup of the municipalities to see the representation that will take place at regional council. We have a fixed number—28 plus me makes 29—and during the last round, Oshawa, because of the changes in size in other parts of the region, lost two regional councillors that were moved to other communities. So the balance works for us.

There is a difference between a regional councillor and a local councillor. The local councillor is really involved, in-depth, in their community but in the area they work in. When you're a regional councillor, you're not really thinking about your community; you're thinking about 2,500 square kilometres. It's a very different thought process. While some will try to manage both, it is very different.

Asking for the size of municipalities—as a former mayor in the city of Oshawa, I can tell you that it is a large land mass, and trying to navigate that with just a few people is not that easy. So if you're looking to make changes, I really think you need to go into the communities and ask them what they want to see. The public still demands representation, and that is what makes our democracy different than most countries in the world. That is a question that will have to be asked within each of the eight municipalities.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Okay. Thank you. My follow-up question: With a two-tier level of government, our government is focused really on building affordable housing and attainable housing, and that was the impetus behind the decreasing of the development charges on affordable and purpose-built rentals. If we have seen this piece where the municipalities are finding challenges with that set-up, what would be the recommended set-up for building affordable housing when you're starting out just from charges with over \$100,000 on each one?

**Mr. John Henry:** I think Durham shows a great example in our partnerships with Habitat for Humanity in how we managed the challenge that they had and the great growth they've seen within the region of Durham. There are ways to—in the past, we've forgiven development charges for Habitat and other organizations.

I'm proud to say that not only do we work just with Habitat; we have two housing organizations within the region of Durham. We have the Durham Region Non-Profit Housing Corp. and the local housing corporation. We manage units. We also have a trial program in Durham of 10 micro-homes, so we're doing a lot of really interesting things. We also bought a former school. We're going through a visioning exercise right now with a school on Ritson Road to see what we can do with that property and the lands around it.

So it's a great conversation, and I think we can show some examples to the rest of the province on how well we work as regional government.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you, Chair Henry.

Over to you, Lorne.

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Chair, and through you to Mayor Foster. Mayor Roy outlined, in a response to a question from MPP Armstrong, where some efficiencies might lie going forward in trying to, for example, meet the housing supply targets—planning and development departments in particular. In your introductory comments, you talked about—I’m looking at the housing supply updates for each municipality, and your target was 953 for 2023. I think I heard you correctly: You’ve met that target?

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** Yes.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Okay. Going forward, do you see any particular challenges in reaching your overall target and, if so, what might they be, and what do you see as some of the solutions potentially?

**Mr. Adrian Foster:** I think you’ve actually heard the answers to this already. One is—I’m going to get back to “use it or lose it.” So 953: We’re very happy. There are roughly 6,000 permits that, with a very little amount of work, could be pulled. Some of those have been available for years. So developers complaining legitimately about high interest rates and inflation and a lack of labour—today, yes. Again, I should not use the word “developer” because these are not developers.

MPP Barnes, you talked about development charges, and as we’ve spoken to—and one of the values and efficiencies of Durham region—without the infrastructure, we cannot build houses. We need water and sewer. So as the funds available to Durham region to put in water and sewer are, some of them, being taken away—Ms. Taylor is here. Was it a \$600-million shortfall on water and sewer, give or take? So \$600 million between now and 2035 that the region will not get, which has to come from somewhere, is going to go on the backs of taxpayers, which is a whole other dynamic of affordability.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you for that response.

Time check, Chair?

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** To the chief administrative officer—through you, please—of the region of Durham. Elaine, you talked about infrastructure. You’ll recall in the most recent economic statement, 2023, there were two feature pieces in that economic statement related to infrastructure. One was the infrastructure bank, and there was another particular initiative related to water and servicing. I’d be interested in your response about what you see as the impacts of those two initiatives within the region of Durham and how that will help you collectively, going forward, to meet the housing targets for the region of Durham.

**Ms. Elaine Baxter-Trahair:** Thank you, through you, Madam Chair. Yes, with respect to the water program, we are in the process of developing a few applications, so we’re very much on top of that, and we’re hoping that it will be material in assisting us expand the Ajax water pollution control plant.

With the infrastructure bank, we talk to them regularly, both provincially and federally, and see it as potentially offering benefits to expanding transit—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Sorry. I let you go a little bit over, but the time is up.

Thank you very much to all the presenters for coming and for the questions. We’ll now move to the next set of presenters, so I’ll give you time to get away from the table.

1100

CITY OF PICKERING  
TOWNSHIP OF ORO-MEDONTE  
TOWNSHIP OF BROCK

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** We’ll ask the city of Pickering and Oro-Medonte to come forward and then the township of Brock. So just come on up to the table. Okay, gang, are we ready? Our three presenters are at the table here. We’ll start in the order that they are on the paper, which is the city of Pickering, Oro-Medonte and then Brock township.

Please start, Mayor Ashe.

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** Good morning, members of the standing committee. My name is Kevin Ashe. I’m the mayor of the city of Pickering and also member of Durham regional council. Prior to being elected mayor in 2022, I served on Pickering council for 15 years, as well as being a Durham regional councillor for seven. I thank you for having me here today in MPP Barnes’s riding.

The city of Pickering is on the western edge of the Durham region and borders the cities of Toronto and Markham, as well as the towns of Ajax and Whitby. Similar to Clarington, we are a proud nuclear host community, generating 14% of the power generated across the province, making Durham the clean energy capital, indeed, of the world. We are Durham’s most diverse community and are projected to have the highest growth rate of all Durham region municipalities, with our population of about 100,000 growing two-and-a-half-fold by 2051. We are well on our way to meet our provincial housing targets of 13,000 new homes, having exceeded our 2023 targets.

Building new, complete communities is a prime example of where the region and the city have effectively collaborated, so I would like to take some time to share some details about that. In the Seaton area of north Pickering, the city and the region worked together to develop agreements with landowners to map out the services that were required and how they would be financed. We also set up timelines to ensure the infrastructure was in place when the developers were ready to get shovels in the ground. Developing this area is a high priority for both the city and the region and it has been treated as such by both parties, with dedicated resources accelerating approvals and infrastructure planning and delivery.

Some examples of the regional infrastructure requirements include a new paramedic station that will include a training centre for use Durham-wide, and major road expansions and traffic infrastructure timed to coincide with regional water and waste water pipes, which minimizes disruptions. We will build several new water reservoirs, as well as elevated water tanks, a new works depot, and we

have recently approved a new regional long-term-care home to make this a complete and livable community. In addition, Durham regional transit is purchasing additional buses and shelters to service the new routes, to make sure the community is connected to the jobs and education opportunities which occur across the region.

Critical regional investments have also occurred outside Pickering's boundaries to enable our growth, notably, an expansion to the Ajax waste depot, feeder-main expansions in Ajax, and upgrades to the Ajax water supply plant that are all required for Pickering's growth.

These are massive projects that require cross-boundary collaboration, and the regional perspective here is essential. The work that regional councillors and staff do in collaboration with their municipal counterparts provides excellent value to the Pickering residents and its businesses.

A clear demonstration of the importance we place on working together to advance our priorities is through our council's decision to share our portion of Pickering's casino gaming revenue with the region. In fact, we are the only municipality in Ontario that has voluntarily chosen to share a portion of gaming revenue with the upper tier. That's up to \$6 million a year that we send to the region because we know the value of our residents in supporting regional services. It's particularly our desire that these funds that come from the city will be used to support housing for vulnerable residents.

As the current chair of the finance committee at the region, work is under way to enhance the debt issuance process and the delivery on behalf of the region and all local municipalities to leverage the region's AAA credit rating for the benefit of all.

From services to support those struggling with mental health, to housing supports for vulnerable residents, we see the power of regional leadership on social issues which cross municipal boundaries. The region is also implementing large-scale bus rapid transit across Regional Highway 2 that connects the urban growth centres in Pickering and Oshawa in close coordination with the city, as well as all the municipalities in between.

I'm here today as mayor of Pickering, but also wearing a regional hat. I know the local government needs to be more nimble, responsive and innovative than ever to deliver services for our residents. I believe the best value for Pickering residents is for the innovation to continue to occur in the context of a well-functioning two-tiered system in Durham.

City staff were speaking with leadership at the board of trade and they were clear: Their members receive excellent service under regional government and don't want any disruption to what is working well. My suggestion to the government, as opposed to changes to regional government, is that the Ontario government should be beginning discussions for a new fiscal deal for municipalities.

In 2023, the city lost over \$3.7 million in development charges as a result of Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, and we estimate a loss of \$2.5 million in 2024. The government of Ontario should engage in a constructive dialogue to establish new fiscal arrangements that safe-

guard municipalities from revenue losses caused by legislative changes, ensuring they can effectively address the demands of development without compromising essential services and burdening local taxpayers.

Rectifying this situation, particularly by eliminating the phased-in approach to DC fees and making the city whole, will empower the city of Pickering to foster sustainable growth, safeguard the well-being of our community, and indeed build homes faster.

In conclusion, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of regional government here in Durham. Our collaborative successes, notably in Seaton, and other regional initiatives showcase the effectiveness of two-tiered systems. However, challenges such as recent legislative changes impacting revenue highlight the need for a new fiscal deal. I encourage the government to engage in constructive dialogues to safeguard municipalities from such losses, ensuring sustained growth, community well-being and expediting a joint goal of home-building efforts.

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

We'll now go to Oro-Medonte. Just state your name before you begin speaking, and thank you for appearing. You're on.

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Randy Greenlaw, mayor of Oro-Medonte. I'm also joined by the deputy mayor, Peter Lavoie. So whenever—is it fine?

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** You can go.

1110

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** Okay. Good morning, everyone. My name is Randy Greenlaw, and I'm the mayor of Oro-Medonte township. I come before you today to express our keen desire to work collaboratively with all levels of government and our municipal neighbours of the county of Simcoe regarding the land use planning opportunities and challenges we currently face.

In November 2023, the city of Barrie sat before this committee in witness of its requirement for more industrial employment lands. In 2010, the city of Barrie annexed 5,600 acres of land from the town of Innisfil. Currently, Barrie is asking to annex a further 5,500 acres from the township of Oro-Medonte and the township of Springwater.

With this in mind, there were closed-session inter-municipal discussions which, to date, have ceased to continue. Discussions ceased when the city of Barrie escalated their land request to this committee without notice to its negotiation partners. From the township of Oro-Medonte's perspective, this decision essentially placed the city of Barrie's additional land request in the hands of the province.

Why the city of Barrie requires an additional 2,500 acres of industrial land from the township of Oro-Medonte when the employment lands previously annexed remain undeveloped is concerning. At a recent ward 1 open house meeting held in Barrie on January 8, the city disclosed publicly that they are only looking north because "the cupboards are bare" and that funding does not exist to extend the city water and waste water pipes south to service the existing designated employment lands.

Four concerns with this statement: Firstly, the primary reason for making land use planning decisions should not be due to lack of funding. Secondly, it is troubling that after 14 years of possessing these employment lands, there has been no financial planning developed for these lands. Thirdly, it should not be the case that annexation is predicated on using the land of municipal neighbours to subsidize municipal budgets, which are oftentimes limited. And lastly, it appears that matters of provincial interest under the Planning Act have not been considered prior to the request from the city of Barrie to annex Oro-Medonte lands.

Why are Oro-Medonte lands the best suited for Barrie's industrial growth through the lens of good planning—or are they? The objective of land use planning is to ensure that, to the extent possible, disruptive uses are not placed adjacent to one another so that safe and vibrant communities can be created, and that uses are consistent with the municipal official plans. Thus, placing the proposed industrial lands 66 feet from an established residential zone, adjacent to an environmentally sensitive area and in the vicinity of Georgian College and Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre does not represent good planning.

It is also important to note that the current roadway and transportation infrastructure is inadequate for the 20,000 employees the city of Barrie is forecasting for this site in addition to the materials and products that would be transported 24/7 through the area. The cost to overcome these necessary upgrades appear to far exceed the cost of running the necessary piping to the annexed employment lands of 2010.

By comparison, the previously annexed lands to the south that are already within the city of Barrie's borders are serviced by a railroad, are adjacent to a six-lane highway, have superior road infrastructure, are less congested, not surrounded by residential land uses and, above all else, are already zoned for industrial uses. Only water and waste water servicing need to be provided.

"The cupboard is bare"—this suggests a couple of things. Firstly, that the financial planning of the city of Barrie has not been in concert with its official plan. It goes without saying that when one acquires land, then one needs to be responsible in setting out a plan to develop those lands and budget appropriate financial reserves. Barrie has had 14 years to do so. At its public meeting, the city of Barrie indicated that it is not the first time that neglectful planning has given rise to land use planning mistakes.

The city of Barrie's reference to "the cupboard is bare" also suggests that when officials are elected to office on zero-tax-increase platforms, they and the represented municipalities should be held accountable for future potential financial challenges. It is not reasonable to suggest or expect that the adjacent municipalities bear the brunt of their poor financial and land use planning. The relentless and steady erosion by urban centres of adjacent rural agricultural communities will drive such communities into insolvency or high taxation regimes.

The township of Oro-Medonte has held firm to its growth and heritage. We are fiscally responsible and continue to

meet our demands. We are more than willing to engage in fair, fiscally responsible planning to protect our agricultural and rural areas for the benefit of all Ontarians. We want to be helpful partners in the solution-driven necessity of building more homes faster and providing jobs for current and new Canadians. We want all residents to thrive in safe and well-designed communities. Oro-Medonte believes the city of Barrie should meaningfully negotiate towards these objectives with its partner communities rather than be permitted to relinquish its financial planning obligations to the province.

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

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** Therefore, my petition to the committee is to require these co-governed, co-joined communities to negotiate a mutually agreeable solution for the betterment of the present and future residents.

In closing, the township respectfully requests the committee consider the following:

The city of Barrie shall undertake a comprehensive planning process through its official plan update and review to demonstrate its land needs following a collaborative process including open sharing of information, as demonstrated through the similar request that we are facing with the city of Orillia.

No decision should be made with the requested boundary expansion until the comprehensive planning process is complete.

The township of Oro-Medonte and the county of Simcoe will be consulted by the city of Barrie regarding the scope of the work relating to the comprehensive planning process.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present today, and I look forward to working collaboratively together with all partners.

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

Now, from the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the mayor of Brock. Please go ahead, Your Worship.

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I really appreciate you adding me to the agenda today and the opportunity to speak. My name is Walter Schummer. I am the mayor of the township of Brock, and we sit at the northernmost point of Durham region.

The region of Durham has served its residents quite well over the last 50 years. However, that is not to say that there could not be improvements to how regional government works and performs for its residents, whether it's in Durham region or elsewhere in the province of Ontario. Durham region is not unique in its geographical makeup, but it should be noted that the mix of urban and rural areas has and will no doubt continue to present challenges.

The challenges are both real and perceived. As mayor of Brock township, I represent what could arguably be the most rural municipality in Durham region. The residents of Brock township are very proud to call it their home, and we are honoured by the history of our piece of Durham region. Regional government has assisted our township in many ways over the years. At the same time, there are many who feel we have more in common with our neigh-



bours to the north in Simcoe county and to the east in the city of Kawartha Lakes due to their rural nature.

The idea of regional government is that it should facilitate the best of rural and urban living, with resources being fairly distributed so that everyone can benefit. There are some aspects of the urban centres in the south of Durham region enjoyed by the density that goes along with such population centres.

Service levels are an important measurement of satisfaction by residents living in a regional municipality. While it is not the sole system of measurement, I feel it's vitally important that residents believe they are receiving value for the taxes paid into the region. For a very long time, there has been a concern in Brock township on whether satisfactory or comparative levels of service are being enjoyed by our residents in areas of transit, policing, social services and other vital regional responsibilities. Generally speaking, regional property taxes are collected in a system which is identical across the region: through assessments. However, whether a particular area or municipality receives fair service levels in return is always debatable.

I believe the province—and when I say “I,” I'm speaking on behalf of our council and our senior staff—should investigate changes to legislation that would require regular reviews, analysis and reporting of regional performance, including the determination of key performance indicators which will be used to measure service levels throughout a regional municipality. These KPIs cannot simply be measurements based on per capita calculations, but must also take into account the uniqueness of rural versus urban centres to account for geography; population density; legislative restrictions, i.e., the greenbelt; assessment inequality and other factors.

**1120**

Review of the value of contributions by residents in member municipalities to the service levels received—in other words, value for money—to ensure residents are not unduly subsidizing one area compared with another area of a regional municipality. Acceptable ranges of services for property taxes paid should be established.

Review of availability of regional services: It's very easy for a regional government to claim that excellent services are available to its residents, but if those services are not as easily accessible for all residents, then the claim is not fully true. The measurement of availability and accessibility should be incorporated into the KPIs and reviewed, as I mentioned earlier.

Problems identified in these reviews and analysis should identify steps that will be taken to correct disparities. Potential corrections could include mechanisms for opting out or modifying regional service delivery with acceptable financial compensation to the affected municipality. The province also needs to define more clearly its funding for regional service delivery so that changes in service delivery in the region can be clearly identified and accommodated and recognized by changes in provincial funding, which would require a change in funding from the regional government to the local municipality.

While some have compared regional municipalities to a family, it has to be acknowledged that sometimes even the best of families have their issues—hear a lot of laughing. Whether it is considered a family or a partnership, regional governments should have built-in mechanisms to better resolve disputes between its members. For any level of government to initiate any kind of legal action, or other threatened legal action, on another level of government within a region is unacceptable unless all possible avenues have been exhausted.

The province should ensure through legislation that, in the event of such disagreements between members of a regional municipality, a mandatory arbitration or resolution mechanism is available. While it is hoped that political leadership can bring about needed solutions, this is just not always the case. Just as the province brought in requirements for integrity commissioners, I believe a similar third-party resolution mechanism should be enshrined in legislation, which would ensure that a small municipality can hold its own when having disagreements with larger local municipalities or even a regional municipality.

Flexibility on how regional governments work should be encouraged. While there needs to be legislation to guide the function and form of regional municipal government, that legislation needs to promote and recognize the uniqueness of different regions in the province without having to develop separate legislation for each region. Prior to the province making significant changes, similar to what has been done recently with the transfer of planning authority to local municipal governments, the province should ensure all possible repercussions have been anticipated and planned for. This would avoid the possible duplication of budgetary actions, where municipal planning department budgets are enhanced while regional planning department budgets are maintained largely intact.

The province holds some degree of responsibility to ensure such processes are as smooth as possible and that the taxpayers and member municipalities are not punished for knee-jerk reactionary legislative changes without making all affected parties whole.

Review of regional governance is critical and it is important for more reasons than just a housing crisis. Regional government is a very large and expensive beast. It should be mandatory that such reviews and comments be initiated on a regular basis. The review should be a serious process, gathering not only the comments and input from municipalities, but also the public that is served by those municipalities—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Mayor Schummer, I'm sorry, we're out of time, but we might be able to—

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Okay, well, I was pretty much finished.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** You were pretty much done? I was so interested that I just didn't watch the clock to give you fair warning, so I apologize for that.

We're going to go over to the official opposition and start with MPP Armstrong, please.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Thank you, all of you, for your presentations. I would like to allow the mayor of Brock to continue and finish what he was interrupted—

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** On behalf of the council of the township of Brock and our residents, I thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Perfect. Very insightful conclusionary statement.

Based on what the mayor of Brock has just mentioned, he's giving suggestions and some solutions with respect to the arbitration process when municipalities or regions are at odds. You talked about a third-party arbitration to listen to their concerns. I wondered if the mayor from Oro-Medonte—how would you feel about that kind of suggestion when it comes to the annexation issue that you have presented? Would that be something that would be entertained by Oro-Medonte? Do you consider that it could be helpful?

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** Yes, I could see value to that, but the initial approach from the city of Barrie to Oro-Medonte was to engage in a partnership on a single facility on our land, that they wanted to build a YMCA on our land, and it would tie in with their service infrastructure. Then it morphed exponentially out of control, where they wanted just to annex everything and demanded to be in control of everything that goes on the land. So unfortunately, we just had a—what was deemed as a partnership became an annexation with consent.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** So it evolved into something where you weren't expecting what direction it went.

I see that you have petitions at the back of your presentation. What mechanisms are there right now to assist Oro-Medonte in looking at what they want and accomplish maybe to, I'm going to presume, end that partnership of further annexation?

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** Well, we explained to them that there is no need to annex. All we're doing is tying in services we could develop. To sum up the scenario of how I would see the solution to this problem is that the OP has been rolled back by Minister Calandra to the adjustments that were made in the fall. So they could re-establish—they have ample industrial land in the south end. They could re-establish the industrial lands in their south end and then lean on their adjacent municipal partners or neighbours to build the housing that they would lose if they jammed in.

Unfortunately, what Barrie has done multiple times is they've called an audible from what was in their official plan and the direction. They've re-zoned industrial land that was zoned at old Molson Park Drive, which is now Mapleview, and filled it with commercial box stores. Then they annexed, in 2010, all the land from the south, articulating the same need: "We don't have employment lands." So they filled part of those employment lands with housing to help out with the housing number. Now they're saying they need a complete community; therefore, in order to have a complete community, they need industrial lands in Oro-Medonte.

It doesn't coincide with the county of Simcoe's plan of where they want industrial lands, which would be more out on the major artery highways, not down a three-kilometre, two-lane road that the county has. Once the annexation takes place, the other challenge is now that

county road is a city road, which would need to be widened and upgraded—it goes through a wetland.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I guess my final question to you would be then: How is this regional government study going to help your issue? If the government—I'm going to, again, hypothetically—forced dissolving of the region, would that be helpful to your municipality or counterintuitive to what you need on this issue?

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** First of all, I owe everyone an apology for being here, but the only reason we're here is because we're coming to respond to Barrie, who inappropriately came and presented in Barrie in November and used it as a platform to go public with something that was being discussed in confidence. We needed to make sure that everyone understood our position. We were willing to do a partnership all along, but that's not how it ended, morphing out of control to where we are today.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Thank you. I'm going to pass it over to MPP Jeff Burch.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Burch, two minutes and 20 seconds.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** I think I'll keep with Mayor Greenlaw. I'm always interested in the effects that two-tier municipalities have with respect to environmental protection and preserving farmland, and I'm understanding that there's a real concern by the farmers in the area with respect to some of these proposals. Barrie is a stand-alone municipality within a county, which is kind of unique. How does not having everyone part of the same official plan impact on being able to preserve farmland and the way of life for people in your municipality?

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**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** I think it's a challenge. It can be a challenge. Our approach in Oro-Medonte is that we're very respectful that that's what we primarily are: We are an agricultural, rural community. We can't stop growth, but it's important that we are very conscientious about a balanced growth and where the growth takes place.

We are currently being approached by two urban centres, Orillia and Barrie, for annexation. Orillia has gone through the proper process, and it's been going on for five years. The mayor of Orillia is very open, and we have collaborative and amicable discussions. He's willing to say, "You build on your lands—I don't need to take it—and you tie into our water and waste water systems." That is the same approach I was hoping to have with Barrie, but it just hasn't been the same.

But I agree with what you're saying: It's important that regional government—I understand it, and the county has a very strong partnership with all of its 16 municipalities in order to control where we do things appropriately rather than everyone off doing their own.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I'm going to MPP Bowman. Please go ahead.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you to all for being here. I'm learning a lot today as a sub on this committee.

I will start with Mayor Ashe. I just want to ask the same question I asked of the last group. You've talked about how the model is working well today, but could you talk a

little bit about what the challenges are and how you think those could be addressed as part of this regional review?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** I think any government that suggests that they're the most efficient they can be is incorrect. I think there are ways that the federal government can get better, the ways the provincial government can get better, the way the regional government can get better, and there are ways that local, lower-tier municipalities can get better.

We do have an opportunity in Durham, I think, to look at efficiencies in regard to fire dispatch and ambulance dispatch, doing it all in one. We're looking at that as something in the short-term, as opposed to a regional fire department. But regional dispatch—I think that's a good initiative that could generate savings and perhaps enhance public safety.

We have to look at how we're dealing with refugees and asylum seekers across our region. There are gaps there and the federal government has not been a full partner in regard to the burden they have put on lower-tier municipalities in regard to that.

Those are two examples that could warrant some further discussions on it, but certainly Pickering is open to having an open mind and open ears to any opportunities for efficiencies. I often listen to my friend the mayor from Brock on my finance committee and he's always as forceful at that committee as he is today in regard to accountability and efficiencies, so we're open to that.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you.

Mayor Schummer, I will go over to you on my next question. As a chartered accountant, I'm certainly very mindful of spending and dollars and like to know that municipalities—as you said, Mayor Ashe, all levels of government are watching how they spend their money. You talked about some of the ideas around KPIs etc. that you could see some value in, in terms of evaluating the model for how we're governing today. You also talked about getting input from the public around their views on this current model. Have you talked to your residents about the model and what you think? What are their views on how it could be delivered more efficiently?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** We're constantly hearing from residents. I'll speak to—I think it was Chair Henry earlier who spoke to the sometimes confusion about who is responsible for what. So not only is there an issue with addressing regional programs and municipal programs in a given regional municipality, but there's the issue of educating the public on where the province sits, where the feds sit. It gets very difficult, especially when municipalities are putting millions and millions more every year into things like health care, funding hospitals. It is a provincial responsibility and should not be hitting property taxes to the point it is, where it's putting undue pressure, and then you've got municipalities competing against one another.

It's not only that issue, but it's the education to the public on where the municipal services really lie, where the regional services lie, and then, of course, where the province and the federal government lie. That input is important, but the input is almost useless without the

education, because there is a huge amount of confusion out there.

I received a letter just the other day—

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

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** —pertaining to health care and why my government was doing what they were doing. My government's not doing that.

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

I'll now go the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Coe, please start.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Mayor Ashe, thank you for taking the time to appear before the standing committee.

I'm looking at the housing supply progress, and you stand out: 127%, beyond many of the municipalities not only here in the region of Durham but across Ontario. What do you attribute that to in particular? And when you answer that, correlate that to some of the adjustments that you've made in the organization of Pickering and some of the other steps that you've taken with your council, please.

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** Getting 127%, in the top three in the province, gets me called an "all-star" from the Premier. I know how important it is to some people.

We do have the benefit of land supply in Pickering. The history of Pickering is that we had 15,000 acres expropriated in 1972 by the federal government for an airport, and soon after that, we had thousands of acres expropriated for a new community which was going to be called Cedarwood, which is now called Seaton. So we've had a long history of working in partnership with the provincial government to get Seaton ready, and we're now seeing the fruits of that combined labour.

We are a willing host. We had land supply. We also have the luxury of greenfield developments as well as infill developments along our transportation corridor—the GO train, as well as the 401 and Highway 2—and we had the fortunate situation of working with the region to have service, water and sewer allocation, which will become more of a challenge as we move through our growth.

We have no doubt that we will be meeting our housing targets. I think we have a shared goal in regard to building houses, more houses faster, and whatever we can do to help out, we're happy to do that. But I think we're lucky because of the housing supply service allocation, being a willing host and the mixture of land as well as infill.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Mayor Ashe, you just talked about what you anticipate in the future to be some water servicing challenges. To what extent will the initiatives that were in the more recent economic statement tabled by the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, those infrastructure initiatives, help you to allay some of those challenges?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** Well, we're fortunate; my MPP is the Minister of Finance, so I have an excellent relationship with him in regard to information-sharing. I think he listens. The mayor of Uxbridge is in the back, and Mr. Bethlenfalvy also represents that area.

There were important initiatives announced that will help in regards to getting more allocation for water and sewer. It's imperative that as we welcome 600,000 more

people to our province every year, we have homes for them, so services are very important.

**1140**

I think the government also led the charge in regards to HST rebates for purpose-built rental. The federal government followed that call, which I think is an important step in regards to more housing.

But I have to, at the same time as congratulating the government in regard to some of those initiatives, still point out that the Bill 23 DCs—the commitment made by two ministers and the Premier about making us whole is imperative. The shortfall at the region is almost a billion dollars over 10 years and almost \$600 million for water and sewer rates. In Pickering, the DC revenues last year were a loss for us of \$3.7 million and are expected to be \$2.5 million this year. Luckily, just down the road, folks, if you have a roll of quarters, there is a casino in Pickering, as well as in Ajax, and we're able to access that revenue stream.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Mayor Ashe.

Through you, Chair, to my colleague MPP Barnes.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Barnes, you have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you again to all the presenters for being here. I just want to put my question to the mayor for Brock. I really liked the discussions that you've had around availability, accessibility and return on investment, so I just wanted to ask you to expand a little bit more on that. What are some of the challenges that you see, particularly in your area, that you're facing with the two-tier level, that you would see be more efficient if you're talking about implementing some of these pieces around availability and accessibility?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** The availability and accessibility issue largely had to do with some social programs offered through the region and, to a degree, funded by the province, which are largely available, of course, in the larger centres. They are, of course, geared to lower-income individuals. Those lower-income individuals typically don't have a car. Even though we're in a very rural area where you've got quite a few people with vehicles, still, the rule is that those without the funds cannot afford that. So the transportation becomes a severe issue to get down to the more southern areas of the municipality to take advantage of some of those services.

We do have regional transit. It is an on-demand service in Brock township, which has had, I'll say, its hiccups over the time. The problem, of course, with transit is you've kind of got to go big or go home, and if you try to avail yourself of it and you have a problem with it, chances are you lose faith in it really fast. So that accessibility issue is just that: It's the geography of our area. The people who need a lot of those services have to travel for those services, and the travel mechanisms are not as easily accessible for them in the north.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Forty seconds.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** So in regard to—and we'll face this across the province—balancing the needs of urban

versus rural, what would be one of the top things that you would want the province to look at in regards to how we level out that equality?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Well, as I mentioned, putting in a system, mandating a system—I know nobody likes to talk about mandating and legislating, but putting in a system to make sure that all regional municipalities review not only what they're doing and how they're doing it, but how affordable it is for everybody and what you're getting for what you're putting in. There's never a perfect system, but there should be at least some kind of defined area where people are going to receive the value for their money.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much. We're going to go to the next round. MPP Armstrong, please go ahead and start.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I just want to ask if—again, I think we're coincidentally asking if you have anything else to add to your statement. I just want to make sure you get your thought out.

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Oh, on the last question?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Yes.

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Well, I'll just expand again on the idea of ensuring that reviews are performed regularly, to make sure that people are receiving the services that we're all so proud to offer. Durham has got a lot of great social services—like I said, some of it funded through the province—but whether or not it's all available, whether people are getting that value for their money is something that has always got to be reviewed, just as I mentioned. This kind of review should always happen. It should be mandated that every so many years we take a look at it.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I appreciate that, because I think that also helps to see what needs are into the future, if there was such a review, as well as potentially prevent further problems, if people are reviewing, as you say, the services they need and if they are getting value for their money.

You had suggested, again, that there's a regular performance review and measurements that the municipalities have to meet. That's the review you're talking about right now, right? Is that your suggestion? Was it you that suggested that?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Probably.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Yes, I believe so. How do you envision that? Is it a model in other cities or other provinces, that you have come up with that suggestion? If you could speak to that a little bit more, how you see that evolving.

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** I haven't seen any models that I'm drawing inspiration from. I'm just thinking—well, brainstorming—that there needs to be a way.

I think MPP Bowman touched on it earlier, with the public. I mentioned in my statement about a perceived issue with some of our residents feeling, "Well, we're not maybe getting"—some of it is perceived; it's not to say that they're not getting good value for their money. Maybe there needs to be a system in place to assure them of that, to explain it, because they will get something confused

between a regional responsibility and a provincial one, and they'll draw a correlation between the two.

If we had a model developed that could be compared province-wide, then people can really realize, "Well, jeez, I'm getting pretty good value for the taxes I'm paying. I'm getting the equivalent of the people in the south or in the other adjacent municipality." It might—might—alleviate some of those concerns.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Okay. Thank you for that.

I did want to ask the mayor of Pickering: You had mentioned that right now, your population—I think I heard 100,000, and projected to be growing to 200,000 and 500,000, so almost half a million, right? Or a quarter?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** It's growing from 100,000 to 250,000.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Okay. So that's doubling, basically, in 2051.

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** Yes.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Okay. And without the government passing Bill 23 or without suggesting dissolving regional or keeping it together, do you feel that your municipality would have met the targets? You had mentioned you have a target of 84,000, I think it was. Was that yours?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** It's 13,000.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** It's 13,000 homes; sorry. So would you say, without all that intervention that the government has proposed, these legislations, that you would be able to accomplish that housing development in your area?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** Well, obviously, when we're going to grow by 150,000 and I only have to give you 13,000 homes, we would have met that goal.

But we're in a different situation than many municipalities in regard to the landmass of government decisions from 40 or 50 years ago, where we do have airport lands set aside still—9,500 acres that the government of Canada is protecting—and then we have the lands along our 407 corridor, which are owned by the province. Our two largest landowners in our municipality are the federal government and the provincial government.

The provincial government has worked with the region, as well as the city, to develop the community of Seaton. We're only about 20% built out, so that's where most of our growth will be, and it will happen over the next decade or so. And then, on another initiative, the city and the region spent many months doing Envision Durham, which is our official plan document, which is sitting on the minister's desk, which identifies an area in northeast Pickering for urban expansion as well. We have a huge amount of land supply, so I don't think we're in the same situation as many municipalities.

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**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Okay, thank you. I'll pass it over to Jeff.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Two minutes left. MPP Burch.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Mayor Ashe, I just wanted to ask you—you referenced your \$3.7-million loss of revenue because of Bill 23, and when you were giving your pres-

entation, you talked about a new fiscal deal. So obviously, making your municipality whole is part of that. I assume you're talking about infrastructure, but what other things would you include with a new fiscal deal as a recommendation to the province?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** Well, the minister as well as the Premier have talked about rewarding municipalities for meeting their housing targets, which we have done. Not everyone has the same potential to do that. So I don't think housing bonusing is the answer to new fiscal arrangements, because it certainly can't be achieved. I know it is happening in Clarington; I know it is happening in Pickering. There are other municipalities that can't do that.

We look towards Toronto and the new fiscal deal that Mayor Chow got in regard to the uploading of significant highways. We have Highway 7 in our community, which is a provincial highway that impacts all of us. There are a number of other things. The government could, again, look towards refugee and asylum seekers in regard to uploading that. That should not be the responsibility of the local taxpayer. It's millions and millions of dollars.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** The use-it-or-lose-it policy on developments that we talked about earlier—

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** I support that initiative as well.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Perfect timing.

MPP Bowman, please, for four and a half minutes.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Mayor Greenlaw, I wanted to come back to you around the expansion of the varied boundaries. The reversal on that decision, as you know, came after the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner's report on the \$8.3-billion greenbelt scandal, which is now being investigated—under criminal investigation—by the RCMP. So that decision was reversed, which is a positive one in terms of the impact on agricultural land.

Certainly, when I talk to the OFA and other farmers across our riding as the agriculture critic, I hear from them that one of the things that we need to do is make sure that we are densifying in our existing towns and cities—and that's not just in Toronto; that's in all of the municipalities—so that we are able to protect our agricultural land and make sure that we have that prime ag farmland, which—much of it, for the whole country, in fact—is in this area of southern Ontario.

Could you talk a little bit more about the importance of protecting agricultural land and what the implications of that are for this regional study?

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** I think it's very important. That's why the position we've taken as a township is that—we're a massive township to begin with; geographically, we're the size of the city of Toronto, and the vast majority of it is agricultural. But how we look at it is, a balanced way of dealing with it is, agricultural land that is adjacent to the urban centres where the services could be tapped into is better than building communities out in the middle of the larger plots of land. We want to keep it consistent like that because running major farm equipment down the county roads adjacent to the city of Barrie or the city of Orillia is not necessarily the most practical or beneficial way to utilize.

If we are going to give up—you know, the planet is not getting bigger; the population is going up and we have a big need for more housing. Strategically, our approach is, let's do it responsibly, respectfully, in order to make sure that we do it around the perimeters. But we can't let the larger urban centres take that land, because at what point do we become sustainable with our tax base when all we're left with is tax at 25% the rate of everything else, minimum?

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Certainly. We know with development charges being removed from your revenues as part of Bill 23, those investments in infrastructure are falling on the backs of your local taxpayers. We also know that building in cities, building that infrastructure and leveraging existing infrastructure, is a more efficient way to build housing in terms of the cost of housing.

So certainly the periphery is one thing, but even within our existing towns and cities and even villages, when you look at the density of population compared to many European cities, we still have lots of room to densify, whether with three- and four-storey buildings in towns or expanding use of fourplexes and other things that will help us take advantage of existing infrastructure.

I wonder if you could just talk a little bit more about the impact of the loss in development charges on your local tax base.

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** Well, you know—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Fifty seconds.

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** Not bad. No, I'm just kidding; I'll make it longer than that.

Predominantly, Oro-Medonte are not your initial homebuyers, but this would give us the opportunity to allow initial homebuyer development and more town-style homes and low apartment buildings to be built. Oro-Medonte has a large lakefront, so predominantly it's a lot of people that retire or move from the city. So it's people's second or third or fourth home that they buy in our township because of the ruralness and the privacy component.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you.

Any closing comments on the impact of the loss of development charges, Mayor Ashe or Mayor Schummer?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** I think I've addressed it.

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** I would have to say the majority of the impact on Brock residents will flow through from the regional portion of the taxes. There will be a township impact. Our staff is still trying to figure that out, but most of it is going to flow through the regional increases that have already been mentioned.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Sorry.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I know. You and I keep going, "Stop talking." Anyway, sorry about that.

Going to the government side: MPP Pang, please start us off.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the mayor of Pickering: In Bill 23, schedule 3, section 2, it mentions "exemptions from development charges for the creation of affordable residential units and attainable residential units, for non-profit housing developments and

for inclusionary zoning residential units." These are the residents that are going to be exempt from the development charges.

May I know, in the previous years—maybe five or 10 years—how much the city of Pickering collected from the development charges? How much money did you collect?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** I don't have that number offhand. Certainly, Pickering has gone through growth more recently because of Seaton, as I talked about, as well as the infill.

No one has asked me today about the greenbelt. Pickering would have been the most impacted community and would have had 12,000 affordable homes if the greenbelt plan had moved forward, including 1,200 in the first phase.

We have been negatively impacted because of the exemptions. I don't have a problem with that. I think we need to support affordable housing and non-profit housing. My issue is that market-rent housing is also getting a discount, and I don't think it has led to (a) lower house prices or (b) quicker houses.

So Bill 23 has some very, very positive things, and it has some things that are less positive that are impacting our ability to build the necessary infrastructure.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** I appreciate that, because we understand that we are in a housing crisis, so everybody needs to work together. There are some impacts on costs, for sure, but we need to work together to deal with it.

My second question is for the township of Brock. You talk about some confusion between levels of government. Do you think it's easier for people to understand only one tier of municipal government, instead of two tiers, so that it sounds to the public that there are four levels of government?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** I would say it would not help. It sounds like it should, but it's just some basic understanding and it's really just getting the word out to people and letting them know. Some of the confusion comes from actions, and I have to tell you, if I had to weigh where the confusion is the most—is it between municipal and regional government, or is it between municipal and regional versus provincial and federal?—it's that higher level of government where the confusion lies. Like I said earlier, a lot of it comes from when we, as a region, have to put more and more into funding the expansion and development of hospitals, to take care of health care and things of that nature, people get very confused. They think we're running health care. They think we're running the hospitals and the health care centres. We're not.

**1200**

We have a health care centre in Cannington, in Brock township, which is finally being built after—I can't even tell you the amount of delays, but it's finally being built. We, at the municipality, at the township, are constantly hearing from residents about that building, and we have to constantly tell them, "It's not the township. The township is not running that health centre." Yes, we put some money into it; the region put half a million into it. But that creates some of that confusion. When they hear their tax dollars—

their property tax dollars—are going into things like health care, they think we're running health care.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Yes, so councillors are decision-makers, to allocate the funding and resources, right? Do you agree with that?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Sorry?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** All these councillors, no matter if they're regional or municipal councillors, are decision-makers—

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Yes.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** —to distribute all the resources, right?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Yes.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** So what do you think: How many councillors are there in Durham plus all the municipalities?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Durham region plus all the local councils? I'm not sure, to tell you the truth.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Does anyone have that number?

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** I don't know.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Previously, when I was in the other region, there were 126 altogether. So what do you think? If there were more than 100 councillors or decision-makers, do you think it's easier for the government to move more smoothly, or with less decision-makers?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** With less decision-makers? I think it would come down to what the decision is being based on, like what is the decision that you're looking at. Sure, some things can always move faster if you've got fewer hands in the pie, so to speak, but you've got a rather large region here. The numbers, as far as a given representative, on how many people they represent varies greatly. It's huge, right? And that comes down to a lot of things, such as the population density areas in the south versus up in Brock township and areas in the north, where we've got 13,000 residents and we've got five, essentially, wards and a regional councillor and the mayor. It gets very difficult to use those quick ways to determine, "Hey, are there too many hands in the pie?"

I spoke to it earlier as far as developing some way to measure what we're doing. It gets a little easy when you just say, "Oh, we'll just look at it on a per capita basis." You can't do that, not when you're comparing very dense

urban areas such as Pickering with Brock township, which is very rural. It's a large area, but not a huge population. So per capita comparisons just don't work.

**Mr. Kevin Ashe:** The answer is 63 councillors.

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** Sixty-three.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** How much time, Chair?

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** You've got a minute and 10 seconds.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Oh, great.

For the mayor of Brock township: What's your opinion on "use it or lose it"?

**Mr. Walter Schummer:** I don't have a problem with the concept, but like anything, it's not so easy. I'm not here, by any means, to defend developers, but we had a developer at our council yesterday looking for some zoning amendments, and the question was put to him: "What are your timelines?" And I have to have some degree of sympathy with changing kind of macroeconomic issues, including interest rates, that that is going to change their plans to some degree. Like I said, I'm not here to defend them. They can defend themselves easily. I don't have a problem with the concept, but the devil's in the details, like anything else.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you. Mayor Greenlaw?

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** In regard to developers, it's very complex, but I will provide my opinion on MZOs—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** In five seconds.

**Mr. Randy Greenlaw:** There needs to be a fiscal accountability of whether or not they have the resources and funds that complete the project that's given, because that's why there's MZOs out there just stalled right now.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you, everyone. That's all the time we have at committee, so thank you to the presenters and thank you for all those providing questions.

The committee is now adjourned until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, January 17, 2024.

*The committee adjourned at 1205.*

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