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HE-25

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HE-25

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

Estimates

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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

Budget des dépenses

Ministère des Affaires municipales et du Logement

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 8 June 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi 8 juin 2023

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Thursday 8 June 2023

Jeudi 8 juin 2023

The committee met at 1400 in committee room 1.

ESTIMATES

MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS
AND HOUSING

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to resume consideration of the 2023-24 expenditure estimates referred to this committee. As a reminder, members may ask a wide range of questions pertaining to the estimates before the committee. However, the onus is on the members asking the questions to ensure the question is relevant to the current estimates under consideration.

The ministries are required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues that they undertake to address. If you wish, you may, at the end of your appearance, verify the questions and issues being tracked with the legislative research officer.

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

The ministry scheduled for consideration today is the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I'm required to call vote 1901, which sets the review process in motion. We will begin with a statement of not more than 20 minutes from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Associate Minister of Housing is here also.

Minister, you may begin. Thank you so much.

Hon. Steve Clark: Hi, everybody. I'm pleased to be with you today to report on the important work and accomplishments of my ministry over the past fiscal year, as our government delivers on our ambitious agenda. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing continues to play an important role in fulfilling our government's mandate under the leadership of Premier Ford, and I'm grateful to the Premier for the trust and the support he has in me as I continue my role as minister.

I'm also pleased to have two new members join the team recently: Nina Tangri was appointed the Associate Minister of Housing; and my new parliamentary assistant to me as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Matt Rae. And not to make him feel bad, I'm going to mention

that my former PA is here, Kevin Holland. So I'm very cognizant—

Mr. Kevin Holland: Okay, you're off the hook.

Hon. Steve Clark: Okay, I'm off the hook—good, good. It might get me a friendly question here.

I just want to say, both Minister Tangri and PA Rae have really hit the ground running for the ministry, and I know the deputy and I and the team really appreciate their efforts.

Over the last year, my ministry worked closely with local governments and partners across various sectors to build safe and strong urban and rural communities and tackle the housing supply crisis so that more Ontarians can find a home that meets both their needs and their budget. I'm pleased to have Associate Minister Tangri here, and she's going to highlight some recent achievements under four themes: housing attainability; working with municipalities to increase housing supply; supporting vulnerable Ontarians; and economic growth and development.

So the first one, housing attainability: All of us here today realize that there's a shortage of supply and a strong demand for homes that's been driving prices out of reach for too many Ontarians. This difficult reality brings me to that housing attainability issue. Over a year ago, our government introduced the More Homes for Everyone plan. This was our government's second housing supply action plan, which, at the time, outlined a suite of concrete actions our government initiated to address Ontario's housing crisis. Some of the examples are protecting homebuyers from unethical development practices and accelerating development timelines to get more homes built faster.

Since then, the government has introduced two more action plans to address the housing crisis. Taking it back to October 2022, we released More Homes Built Faster, which was a historic and very ambitious plan which contained a variety of practical measures to cut red tape, remove barriers and encourage builders to provide the type of housing Ontarians need. This was followed by Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants in April 2023, the latest series of steps that our government is taking to increase housing supply. I'm going to get into more details of our latest action plans and specific proposals a bit later. But first, as part of the committee process, I will reflect on the progress we've made and highlight our many achievements during the 2022-23 fiscal period, beginning with the More Homes for Everyone plan.

More Homes for Everyone was built on a three-part consultation with industries, municipalities and the public on ways that we can increase housing supply and affordability. We created a Housing Affordability Task Force which engaged a wide variety of stakeholders. They developed a report with recommendations on additional measures to increase the supply of housing to address the housing crisis.

We also met with big city mayors and regional chairs through a first-ever provincial-municipal housing summit, which took place in early 2022, as well as meeting with representatives from rural, remote, northern municipalities to discuss how we can coordinate and work together to build homes faster right across the province.

We also had an online public consultation on housing affordability. Groups and other stakeholders shared with us their input on how we can increase our supply of housing. Then, to support the plan, we passed legislation that is delivering both near-term solutions and long-term commitments to make more housing options within reach for Ontario families.

Then, again, to build on those initiatives, in October 2022, our government passed the More Homes Built Faster Act, which contained practical measures that will have a real impact on communities. It will get housing built quickly and reduce the cost burden on potential homebuyers.

For example, our plan supports forward-thinking zoning for greater height and density near transit. It also encourages gentle intensification by giving homeowners the right to have up to three units on most urban residential lots. Our plan reduces unnecessary red tape and streamlines planning approvals to get more homes built faster.

Most recently, on April 6, we introduced the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. Those changes are meant to spur the creation of new homes but also offer historic new protections to tenants and landlords.

The second theme: working with municipalities to create housing supply. Our government set a very ambitious goal—a million and a half homes to be built over the next 10 years. But we also know that with that ambitious goal, we can't tackle the housing supply crisis on our own. Everyone needs to play a role in addressing the housing crisis, including our municipal partners, which, again, brings me to working with municipalities to increase housing supply.

As I mentioned earlier, we met with mayors and regional chairs. We met with representatives from all of the other affiliates of AMO to discuss how we can coordinate and better work together. We're also helping local governments become more efficient by addressing local barriers to building homes that will meet the needs of their residents.

As an example, in More Homes for Everyone, our plan included measures to help municipalities move priority projects forward. We created a new tool, the community infrastructure and housing accelerator, which really helps municipalities expedite approvals for housing and community infrastructure, things like hospitals or community

centres, and changes to streamline site plan requirements and approval processes to support consistency across the province while taking the politics out of the planning process.

Recognizing that municipalities play a critical role in reaching our goal of 1.5 million homes by 2031, our More Homes Built Faster plan introduced supply targets for our 29 largest and fastest-growing municipalities. I'm happy to report that the vast majority of these municipalities have pledged to either meet or to exceed their housing goals.

We also continued our investment in local initiatives, aiming at delivering modern, efficient, sustainable services to make life more convenient and affordable for families, for businesses and communities. Up to \$350 million was allocated in the 2022-23 budget to help municipalities identify and implement modern solutions for various programs, things like the Municipal Modernization Program, the Audit and Accountability Fund, the Streamline Development Approval Fund. It really helped municipalities unlock housing supply by streamlining, digitizing, modernizing their approach, and I'm proud to report that we've supported as a government—and I think we all need to take some credit in this—940 modernization projects across the province.

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In January 2022, we launched the third intake of the MMP, or Municipal Modernization Program. We gave \$28 million to municipalities to support 322 projects. The ministry also funded an additional 45 projects through intake three of the Audit and Accountability Fund to really help those large urban municipalities, some of our largest and fastest-growing communities, to be able to streamline approvals and move towards that digital modernization and service integration. The investment there was almost \$8 million.

Additionally, in January 2022, we launched the new Streamline Development Approval Fund. We made more than \$45 million available to Ontario's 39 largest municipalities, to help them implement initiatives aimed at streamlining approvals and unlocking housing supply. Those, members of the committee, are just a few ways that we're working with municipalities on their local needs to increase housing supply and to help reach our goal.

Now I'll turn over to Minister Tangri to do the remaining themes of supporting vulnerable Ontarians and economic growth and development. Thanks, Chair. I'll throw it over to the associate minister.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Please go ahead.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister Clark. I am truly honoured to join the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as associate minister. Working very closely with Minister Clark and the Premier, I look forward to supporting our ambitious goal of building 1.5 million homes for Ontarians over the next decade and our continued collaborative spirit and passion for finding solutions that work for communities as we partner with municipalities, non-profits and stakeholders across sectors.

We know more housing supply is urgently needed across the province, from supportive housing for vulnerable populations to affordable options for our young families. I'm optimistic that with the strong leadership from Minister Clark and the team effort across government, we can make real progress in expanding housing options for all Ontarians.

With that, I'm pleased to speak to theme number three: supporting vulnerable Ontarians. From day one of the pandemic, our government took immediate action to help improve housing and homeless shelter solutions and support vulnerable people. We immediately recognized the effects of COVID-19 on vulnerable people in our communities, including those who are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless.

Through our Community Housing Renewal Strategy and COVID-19 response programs, we've invested nearly \$4.4 billion over the past three years. This money was used to grow and enhance community and supportive housing for vulnerable Ontarians and Indigenous people, address homelessness and respond to COVID-19. This included the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund, which provided much-needed support to our municipal service managers and Indigenous program partners, to help them meet crucial pandemic-related needs and create new affordable and supportive housing specific to the unique needs of our diverse vulnerable populations.

Due to the continued need, we invested an additional \$154.4 million in 2022-23 to continue the fund, bringing our total social services relief fund investment to well over \$1.2 billion. It's been incredible to see the innovative results of this program and the positive impacts that this fund has had on all of our communities, such as adding to rent banks, keeping vulnerable people housed and creating long-term housing solutions.

Community housing provides affordable housing for those who are unable to access the private rental market. Our Community Housing Renewal Strategy outlines our plan to work with our partners to stabilize and grow the community housing sector. On March 30, 2022, we announced a new community housing regulatory framework to stabilize and improve the system for those who live and work right through it and through these measures that encourage housing providers to remain in the system by signing service agreements—also to require service managers to set local income and asset limits for rent-gated-to-income assistance, improve efficiency and update accountability rules for service managers to encourage new programs that meet local housing needs. These measures will protect critical community housing supply. They will encourage housing providers to continue to offer more affordable rents for tens of thousands of Ontario households and continue to prioritize survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking for rent-gated-to-income assistance.

As of January 1, 2023, all of these changes have come into effect, with full implementation of the new framework by July 1, 2023. In the meantime, we're going to continue working with our partners to support the implementation

of new regulations, support change management, and explore future opportunities for transformation.

Our government has also increased supports to prevent homelessness and create longer-term housing solutions. Last year, we introduced a new streamlined Homelessness Prevention Program to help more people experiencing or at risk of homelessness find housing, helping them find the services and the supports that they need. Shortly after introducing this new program, we increased its funding by almost \$25 million, and through our 2023 budget, we made a historic additional investment of 40% more, or \$190.5 million annually, for the Homelessness Prevention Program. This is the most funding that Ontario has ever invested in homelessness prevention, and provides local service managers with a flexible, predictable source of funding to help meet local needs.

The 2023 budget also increased funding for the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program by an additional \$11.5 million annually. This program provides culturally appropriate housing assistance and support services to Indigenous people who are experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness. My ministry is also leading the Multi-Ministry Supportive Housing Initiative and is currently working with ministries right across this government, with various stakeholders, sector partners and people living in supportive housing, to identify ways to make it easier for people to get the help that they need.

In November 2022, my colleague Michael Parsa, the former Associate Minister of Housing, held seven round table meetings with key stakeholders and partners from across the province to discuss how we can continue to improve supportive housing in Ontario. One of the major themes that we heard was the need for more supportive housing supply. Our government responded by increasing our annual investment under the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program to create more supportive housing for people in need. Service managers and Indigenous program administrators have the flexibility to use this funding for both capital and ongoing operation of supportive housing. We also heard that access to supportive housing needs to be improved, and we'll continue to integrate the feedback from these sessions as we work to improve Ontario's supportive housing system.

A strong provincial-municipal partnership builds strong communities. During COVID-19, we delivered critical services and now we're laying the foundation for economic recovery. Through our fourth theme, we made changes to support increased investment, job creation and faster infrastructure like highways, transit and housing. We streamlined Planning Act approvals to get projects started faster and minister zoning orders to accelerate priority projects like transit developments, long-term care and affordable housing.

Our Community Infrastructure and Housing Accelerator helps municipalities speed up approvals for hospitals, long-term care and more while increasing transparency. Minister Clark approved the Blue Mountains' request to fast-track 160 long-term-care beds and seniors' housing in Grey county using this tool. We encourage municipalities

to use this tool to address community needs and get priority projects started much faster.

We're also modernizing building code services to accelerate housing. We allowed taller mass timber buildings and streamlined approvals for modular buildings. More tenants can occupy lower floors of tall buildings much sooner. We introduced a digital building code compendium, with over 9,000 requests filled, and it provides builders convenient access to accelerate innovation. We're harmonizing Ontario's building code with national codes to reduce red tape and open many opportunities. The next edition of the building code will be released this summer, and I look forward to continue working with partners to ensure Ontario's buildings remain amongst the safest and most accessible.

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On behalf of Minister Clark and myself, I want to thank our outstanding team and ministry staff for your years of leadership, advice and support. We're extremely grateful for all your dedication and hard work, which is helping to ensure that communities across Ontario have efficient local governments that meet the needs of residents. Your efforts also play a crucial role in achieving our goal of ensuring that all Ontarians have access to housing that is affordable and meets their needs.

There is still much work to do. But thanks to your expertise and commitment, I know we're making real progress in serving the people of this province.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much, Ministers. We will now begin questions and answers in rotations of 20 minutes for the official opposition members of the committee, 10 minutes for the independent member of the committee, and 20 minutes for the government members of the committee for the remainder of the allotted time. As always, please wait to be recognized by myself before speaking. All questions and comments will need to go through the Chair.

For the deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and staff, when you are called upon to speak, please give your name and your title each time so that we may accurately record in Hansard who we have.

I will start with the official opposition. MPP Bell, if you want to begin your 20-minute rotation.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the minister, the associate minister and key staff from the ministries coming in here today. I very much appreciate it. We all do. I think we can all agree that the goal is to ensure that housing is more affordable in Ontario and that everyone can find a home they can afford to either rent or buy. That's the goal.

Where we differ is that we see a need for a very comprehensive approach where we meet our housing targets. We build the homes that Ontarians need, but we also double down on building affordable homes and affordable housing. We bring in stronger protections for renters. We make it easier for first-time homebuyers to get their first home by making it harder for investors to buy their third, fifth or 20th home. And it is absolutely essential that we get it right. It really is.

I'm also concerned about the government's track record when it comes to housing. The government has been in power for five years. Housing has never been more expensive to rent and it has never been more expensive to buy and maintain a mortgage right now. That's the reality that we have in Ontario. We're at record rental prices.

I also want to thank the many stakeholders who responded to the announcement that estimates were happening today and provided questions and information in order to allow me to ask practical and useful questions that will benefit people who provide housing, who live in housing, who go to the LTB to represent tenants and landlords alike, who maintain housing. So thank you for that as well.

My first question is pretty simple. I've had many stakeholders reach out to me, especially providers who maintain housing and who operate housing, who have been concerned that they have been left out of formal stakeholder conversations around the housing supply plan and housing affordability conversations. If I give you a list afterwards of stakeholders within the housing sector who would like to be formally included in future conversations, would you be interested in looking at that list and inviting them to future events?

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Chair. Through you to the member: We hold open consultations with stakeholders, so no one should feel that they have been left out. Many times—and I will go back to More Homes, More Choice, our very first housing supply action plan in 2019. We encouraged both government members and opposition members to have open consultations on our housing supply action plan in their own ridings, with stakeholders that were pertinent to them. We also encouraged our municipal partners, as part of our first-ever provincial-municipal housing summit that the Premier and I hosted, that they would do the same.

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

Hon. Steve Clark: So we are always organizing open consultation processes—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Minister—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Chair. So to summarize, I will follow up by sending a list of stakeholders who are interested in being formally involved in the housing supply and housing affordability conversations. I'll send that to staff and also to you. You can take a look at them and see if you want to include them, because that was the very specific request.

The second question I have refers to the estimates itself, and I'd like it if we could take a look at page 47. When I look at page 47, what I see is that there's been a drop in the overall amount of funding that has been allocated to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing of \$145 million approximately, where there was \$1.56 billion in actual spending in 2022-23 and that has dropped to \$1.44 billion in projected spending—so a year-over-year drop between actuals and projected for the ministry. What's been cut? Since there's been a cut, what's been cut? What specific programs have been cut?

Hon. Steve Clark: You're referring to Table A1: Total Operating and Capital Summary by Vote Continued, page 47 of page 102?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes. Correct.

Hon. Steve Clark: Deputy, do you want to make sure that we get the right information? Could we—?

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: Would you like me to speak to that, Minister?

Hon. Steve Clark: Sure.

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: My name is Kate Manson-Smith. I'm the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Thank you for your question. I would say that in any ministry there are changes year over year, and what you would see in that chart is not a reflection of a cut in funding but a reduction in year-over-year funding because sometimes funding is one-time only. For example, last year the government provided funding to the city of Toronto on a one-time basis. That would not show in our budget going forward.

If you have specific questions, I'm happy to answer, but that is the reason why you would see a change: because some programs do not exist on a multi-year basis.

Hon. Steve Clark: And then as well—Chair, if I might—other programs were over a set period of time. For example, the Municipal Modernization Program, the Audit and Accountability Fund, the Streamline Development Approval Fund—we were very open, especially with the MMP and AAF, that those were a three-year program. Municipalities knew that, and that's why the third year of the program was implementation.

The other challenge that our ministry has, and it's because of the NHS, is that there are some of those federal-provincial cost-share programs that end and then others begin as part of the national housing strategy—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Chair. I think I'm going to take back my time, because I'm not getting a clear answer and I'm just going to read it into the record, if you don't mind.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. The minister is just trying to finish up here.

Hon. Steve Clark: I was giving a clear answer. There are simply programs that are part of the NHS that do sunset, and then there are other programs that begin. That's the answer.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. Yes, programs sometimes run for one year. Sometimes programs run for three years. The amount of COVID funding from the federal government has certainly depleted. But at the end of the day, the ministry's funding that is going to be allocated and spent has been cut by \$145 million, and I'd like to ask the staff to formally do an assessment of what has been cut as a result of that \$145-million reduction year over year. I can put that in writing afterwards as well.

My next question—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): They can answer that question here right now.

Hon. Steve Clark: We're here. We've got officials here. We're prepared to answer them right now.

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: I can invite our CAO to speak to that.

Ms. Jessica Bell: What I'm going to do is I'm just going to keep going, and then I can do a formal question request.

Hon. Steve Clark: But we are here, Chair, and we are able to answer those questions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I believe it's my time.

Hon. Steve Clark: That's why I'm here at estimates: to answer questions.

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. You can table a question, but I just want to be clear that they are offering to answer the question for you now, if you wish.

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair, I want to make it clear: We're here, and we're prepared to answer the question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. So how about this: I would like a very specific answer. There's been a \$145-million cut, which means that there have been some reductions in specific services. Looking at it, the bulk of the cut has taken place to municipalities. That's where I'm seeing the bulk of the cut. But I'd like a specific response here. Like you, I know full well that some programs run for two years and some programs run for three. Some programs run for one.

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Hon. Steve Clark: Yes. I just want to say that there isn't a province or territory in Canada that renegotiated their Safe Restart Agreement. We had a historic agreement in Ontario. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we negotiated a \$4-billion package that benefited municipalities when they needed it the most. There isn't a province or territory that renegotiated a second or third after the pandemic was over. We can give the member, through staff, more specific information.

But I wanted to say that when Minister Smith and I came early on in the pandemic—I think it was day three or four—and we looked into a teleprompter and we announced the social services relief fund—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Chair, I'm going to take back my time. I'm fully aware that COVID funding has been cut. I'm asking specifically how services are going to be impacted. Now, I'm going to go to my next question, because this is my time.

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair, I don't want to allow a mis-characterization from the member—

Ms. Jessica Bell: My next question relates to the HPP funding—

Hon. Steve Clark: No, listen—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): If the minister could just wrap up in another 30 seconds, and then it is MPP Bell's time. She can ask—

Ms. Jessica Bell: It is my time, and I'm now going to ask my next question. You have ample time—

Hon. Steve Clark: So she doesn't want our officials to answer the question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: No. My next question—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): She's choosing to ask a written question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, I'm choosing to ask a question.

Hon. Steve Clark: She's choosing not to get an answer to a question? I just want to make sure I'm clear, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes, she is asking for that.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My next question relates to the Homelessness Prevention Program funding. The Homelessness Prevention Program funding was announced with great fanfare, and also great shock, because some municipalities received a decent amount of money and some municipalities, such as Ottawa, received very little. Specifically, Ottawa received just \$845,000 for homelessness prevention, which builds about two affordable homes. This is at a time when the homelessness crisis in Ontario has never been worse. It has never been worse.

These are my specific questions:

(a) Can you provide the committee with a full accounting of how the HPP funding was allocated to service managers and municipalities?

(b) Can you explain the formula that you used to determine how much each service manager or municipality got?

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair, so that we don't repeat me not being able to give the member an answer, like happened with the previous question, we're going to ask Angela from the ministry to come up and answer the second part of MPP Bell's question.

Ms. Angela Cooke: Good afternoon. Angela Cooke, assistant deputy minister with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, leading the community and supportive housing division.

In response to the question, in April 2022, we launched the Homelessness Prevention Program, which does combine three housing programs—which are the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Home for Good and the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program—into one simplified and streamlined initiative totaling \$463.4 million in annual funding.

Beginning in 2023-24, the ministry is investing an additional \$202 million annually in homelessness prevention programs to help those experiencing or at the risk of homelessness and to support the community organizations to deliver supportive housing. This includes an additional \$190.5 million annually under the HPP. The HPP funding has increased by over \$190 million annually to approximately \$640 million each year.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. My specific request is, can you follow up with the committee with an itemized list—I don't need it read out now—of how much each service provider and municipality got? And can you explain clearly, in writing to the committee after, what the formula was that you used? It's a simple yes-or-no question.

Hon. Steve Clark: No. I'm here right now, and we can answer, if you would allow Angela and I to answer. We can give you that rationale. We don't need to come back. We're literally sitting here, and we're prepared to answer the rationale on, based on the Auditor General's report, the things that we changed on that formula to get it the way it

is now. We don't need to come back. We don't need to provide it written to the committee. We're here right now in this round, and we're prepared to do it right now.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Because I only have 20 minutes, because this government refused to say yes to 15 hours of estimates, which is common, I'm going to ask my next question—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Just a second, MPP Bell. We're just going to pause for a minute.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Sure.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): They've offered to answer the questions here. You're saying, no, you'd like to move on to the questions. Just to be clear that that is—

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm absolutely clear and I'm reading into the record, which I also will do afterwards, that I would like the ministry staff to follow up in writing with the specific amounts of funding allocated to each service provider and municipality. I am now going to move on to my next question.

My next question is related to the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit. The Rental Housing Enforcement Unit's job is to uphold the Residential Tenancies Act. I would say that it is a program that is not as strong as it could be—and I'm being polite there. It receives, going by the estimates documents, about 17,000 inquiries a year, but I would like some additional information about the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit.

These are my specific questions: What is its budget and staffing component, and what assessment do you have around what it does? Specifically, how many complaints come in a year? What are the types of complaints? Are they from landlords? Are they from renters? Is it about illegal evictions? Is it about poor maintenance? How many are investigated? How many times are administrative fines issued, and how many are referred to prosecution? So, really getting a better understanding of where we're at with that unit.

The reason why this is so important is because, when we call the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit, we get a busy signal, or we get to leave a message and no one responds. Or, on rare occasions, we will get a response in egregious situations and the staff say, "We do not have the capacity to deal with the issues that are coming our way." We are talking situations where a tenant is forcibly evicted, using force, by a new landlord, where the police are actually called and the new landlord is charged, but the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit doesn't do anything to get that person back into their unit. That's an example of how egregious it has been, and the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit has said, "We do not have the staff to even deal with cases like this, where it has become a criminal matter."

So tell us about the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit.

Hon. Steve Clark: In terms of those monetary questions and the other follow-ups, we'll bring up—

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: As well, I'll ask our CAO to come and speak to the roles and the specific questions you've asked, MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you.

Ms. Joanne Davies: Hi, my name is Joanne Davies. I'm the CAO and the ADM of the business management division.

Responding specifically to your questions, on page 11 of the estimates, the budget for the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit and all of its components is 1.8. There are approximately 18 staff associated—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Hold on, \$1.8 million?

Ms. Joanne Davies: Yes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I don't see that on page 11 of mine, but okay, \$1.8 million. And then 11 staff?

Ms. Joanne Davies: No, 18 staff.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Eighteen, okay.

Ms. Joanne Davies: The role of the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit is very specific in the legislation, which is to prosecute the listed offences under the statute. That is its job. To do that, it has a call centre and it receives a large volume of calls each year. That number ranges from 14,000 to 18,000 calls.

In terms of those calls, many of them are resolved at the call stage. Again, about 10%, between 1,400 and 1,800 each year, move to intervention, and that is the stage where often compliance is obtained voluntarily. The unit has no power; it makes no findings. But it can connect landlords and tenants and try and achieve solutions.

Approximately 150 cases each year move then to the investigation stage, and then, if the investigation shows that there are potential grounds for a prosecution, that goes to the Attorney General. In the average year, 40 cases are prosecuted.

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So those are the numbers, the budget and the staffing.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I will have some additional questions to read into the committee, but the specifics there were actually quite helpful for me.

The next question I have is about inclusionary zoning.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's a minute and a half left, just to let you know.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you.

The city of Toronto, after many years, moved forward with an inclusionary zoning plan that would require big developments of 100 units or more to have an affordable housing requirement—5% to 20% over a period of time; condos prioritized; purpose-built rentals. The affordable housing requirement would be delayed because we know it's a little tougher to build purpose-built rentals.

Minister, 104 applications from the city of Toronto have gone to your desk for approval so the city of Toronto can start requiring developers to build their fair share of affordable housing. Your ministry has not approved a single one of them. Are you going to approve these inclusionary zoning permits and, if so, when? Yes or no? It's simple.

Hon. Steve Clark: We have a number of applications in with the ministry. We've got a variety of official plans, regional official plans. We review documents. I can't, at committee stage, pick one or several and give you a date. However—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Well, maybe there's a staff person here who is dealing with the inclusionary zoning file who can respond to that, Minister—

Hon. Steve Clark: However, what I will say—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay—

Ms. Jessica Bell: —because there are 104 applications.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Bell, it doesn't do any good to over-talk when the minister is trying to answer the question. There are seven seconds left.

Hon. Steve Clark: However, what I will say is, when we do make a decision, the decision gets posted. So we'll review the situation and send a link to the member once some of those decisions—

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

Hon. Steve Clark: —if we understand them correctly, will be posted.

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

MPP Blais for 10 minutes—please start.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Ministers, thank you for your presence this afternoon. I'm going to attempt to be more productive and less performative and do my best to try to get some answers.

Your government has a housing plan that has a goal of building 1.5 million homes over the, I guess, next nine years—10 years in total. Last year, according to the estimates, you were reporting 74,000, which is half of what the annual average needs to be to achieve your goal, and so I'm wondering what went wrong.

Hon. Steve Clark: What we use in the ministry is—we talk about housing starts; that's why we use the 1.5 million housing starts over the next 10 years.

When we look at the stats across the province, we show a different number than the one that MPP Blais has quoted. As I've said in the House many times, in 2021 we received almost 100,000 housing starts, which was the highest level of housing starts since about 1987—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Minister, I apologize; I appreciate that I'm cutting you off, and I'm trying not to. I don't want to be that way.

The PDF page 31, which is page 30 of the estimates document that we received, says, "As of the 2022 calendar year, nearly 74,000 homes were completed..." If the goal is to build 1.5 million, which averages to 150,000 a year—that is half of what the annual goal should be if you're going to build, on average, 150,000 a year. So what is the plan to catch up? Because next year, you have to build 150,000 plus the gap, which is another 75,000.

Hon. Steve Clark: As a government, we decided that we were going to use all measures possible. We are going to continue, just like we did a few moments ago when we received royal assent on our Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act—we've committed to Ontarians that we would have a housing supply action plan bill every year in a four-year term under the leadership of Premier Ford. We will continue to present measures through legislation and regulation. We'll continue to work with our municipal partners to ensure that we hit that 1.5 million goal.

Obviously, despite global and national challenges such as the rising cost of labour, rising interest rates, inflationary pressures, the numbers that I've quoted in terms of starts are very encouraging. Is there more work to do? Absolutely, and we're going to continue to use the Housing Affordability Task Force report as our road map moving forward.

We will continue to work with our municipal partners. We're in the middle of a conversation with our regions about strong-mayor powers, with ensuring that the housing pledge targets are met, facilitating streamlining of development at the regional level. All of those things will build upon the existing housing supply action plans that we've tabled.

There's no silver bullet. There's no one-and-done that's going to get us to a million and a half by 2031. Everything we do is building upon that success moving forward.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Okay. You talked about the housing pledges. As you know, I'm from Ottawa. The city of Ottawa has a pledge, I believe, of 151,000 units as the ministry's goal for the city of Ottawa. If you look last year, in 2022, according to open data from the city of Ottawa, they issued permits to build 12,349 new units, which is 3,000 short of the average goal that needs to be achieved to hit their target.

If you look at open data from the first four months of this year, in the first four months of this year they have issued permits for 2,414 new units, which, if you project out through the balance of the year, will leave them almost half of what they're supposed to achieve by the end of this year to meet your goal. So, again, I'm wondering: What is going wrong with the measures that you've already introduced, if the second-largest city in the province can only achieve 50% of your stated goal for them?

Hon. Steve Clark: Ottawa signed on to the pledge. Obviously, they believe as a council that they're going to hit the pledge. My numbers—you're using a bit of different numbers. I try to use the same number on housing starts. Ottawa, year to date from my figures, shows about a 9% increase in housing starts, so I'm very encouraged by what I'm seeing in the city.

And again, I was in the city yesterday, with our provincial and territorial ministers of municipal affairs. We had a presentation by Mayor Sutcliffe to the ministers from across Canada. I'm very encouraged by what he said, both as the mayor of Ottawa but also in his capacity with FCM, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I think, generally, municipalities like the city of Ottawa have signed on to the pledge, want to do their part, want to work with the government on streamlining development approvals.

But, MPP Blais, our numbers don't jive. I'm trying to use the same numbers moving forward in terms of housing starts. I'm showing about a 9% increase year to date so far.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Wonderful. Minister, I'm using the open data from the city of Ottawa's web portal—

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm using city of Ottawa data.

Mr. Stephen Blais:—which is updated in real time. So if you have access to different data, is that data that you

can provide to me or to the committee as a whole in real time so that we can track your government's progress on achieving your goal? So we can continue to use the same numbers, as you suggested.

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: I wonder, MPP Blais—you mentioned 75,000. I think that's the annual average. In respect of Ottawa, I don't have that number available, but I did just want to add something to what the minister commented on.

The government has been making comprehensive and rapid changes. The minister spoke to streamlining development approvals, and in respect of the legislation, in respect of the policy, a lot has happened in the last, I would say, two to three years, as the minister spoke to. Now those policies are going to start to be—that legislation, those policies are going to start to impact what's happening in the development environment.

So I don't want to imply a long delay, but I think you would not see reflected in current numbers the impact of changes that—for example, we're consulting on the Provincial Policy Statement right now, which is going to drive more housing outcomes. So that is not policy until it takes effect. I just hope that's helpful.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Fair enough. I can appreciate your point of view on that, and there is some start-up time needed. But if they're only achieving half of what the average goal needs to be, that's a lot of catch-up that needs to happen. So what measures is the ministry putting in place to track, let's call it, incremental or progressive progress on implementing the policy and achieving the goals?

Because I'm told that, in the city of Ottawa, the implementation of Bill 109 is not proceeding at all, really, and certainly not at the pace that the homebuilding community needs or wants. One of the major builders in Ottawa has told me that they're sitting on ready-to-move-in, effectively, vacant units. It's not a question of supply in Ottawa; as you know, there's lots of land. They are sitting on ready-to-move-in vacant units.

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And so what measures are you going to use and share to track, in real time, the policy implementation progress that is, effectively, the only lever you have at the moment to encourage new housing starts?

Mr. Josh Paul: Hello, my name is Josh Paul. I'm the ADM of the market housing division.

Thank you for the question. First, maybe I can provide just a very quick clarification on the 74-versus-higher starts number—

Mr. Stephen Blais: The goal for the city of Ottawa, as I understand it, is 151,000 over the 10-year period, right, which is 15,100 per year. According to open data published on the city's website, right now, to date this year, they have issued permits for 2,414 new units, which, if you project out for the year, is 7,242, which is half of the average goal.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Fifty-seven seconds left.

Mr. Josh Paul: Ever so quickly, MPP Blais: The 74,000 that you refer to on an aggregate number for the

province refers to completions in the year 2022. As the minister rightly points out, the focus is on starts.

To segue to your second question, that is the measure that we are, at the beginning of this 10-year mandate to build 1.5 million homes, focusing on because it's about the housing that will materialize, and so—

Mr. Stephen Blais: For a home to be livable, it has to have been completed, right?

Mr. Josh Paul: That's correct.

Hon. Steve Clark: It's also got to start.

Mr. Josh Paul: It's also got to start, MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Sure.

Mr. Josh Paul: But you asked about what data points the ministry was using. We are tracking on a monthly basis the data that CMHC provides that everyone can see on how—

Mr. Stephen Blais: But that's the data on starts. How are you tracking the bureaucrats, the city staff, the public service—whatever you want to call them—and their actual progress on implementing the policy changes you've made through legislation?

You have 40 minutes to think about your answer.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Yes, we don't have time for a response in this round, so MPP Blais has promised, apparently, to come back to that.

Over to the government side for the next 20: MPP Holland, you can begin the 20 minutes.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you to Minister Clark and Associate Minister Tangri for being here today and, of course, to all the staff that's here as well. I appreciate all the hard work that the staff has been putting in over the last year. It can't be undervalued and underappreciated, the time that's been spent.

I do have a question for the minister—that I will actually allow you to answer, Minister, as I understand that this forum is to ask and have questions answered. It appears members opposite are using it to simply make statements and not get explanations.

But before I get to my question, with regard to the HPP funding that was brought up by the member opposite, coming into this, I'm very familiar with the indicators and the formula that has been used because I took the time to look at it and, as well, speak to service providers all across northern Ontario for their explanations and their input with regard to the new formula that is being used. I would like to allow the opportunity to have your staff provide an explanation on those indicators that was not allowed by the members opposite.

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes, we'll call Angela up again. Suffice it to say, she will go through the fact that there were Auditor General's recommendations as well, and we dealt with the present indicators as opposed to historical spending, which had been done in the past. We can systematically go through the COHB criteria.

Angela, do you want to come up and finish the answer that we started?

Ms. Angela Cooke: Good afternoon. Angela Cooke, assistant deputy minister with the community and supportive housing division with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

Interjection.

Ms. Angela Cooke: Can you hear me? Okay.

The summary of the funding model comprises six indicators, the first one being the number of people experiencing homelessness in a particular service manager area. To determine that, we've based that on the social assistance qualifiers, and that's based on data from 2019 right through to the end of 2022. That includes individuals on Ontario Works as well as folks on the Ontario Disability Support Program, and that proportion is roughly 40%.

We then take a look at deep core housing need, and by deep core housing need, we take a look at the amount of households who are spending more than 50% of their income on shelter costs as defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. Based on the 2021 census population, that amounts to 29% of the calculation.

Then we take a look at the number of supportive housing units, and that's based on the number that each service manager reports through to us on an annual basis. For 2021, we apportioned 10% to that calculation.

We then look at the low-income measure, which is based on the service managers who identify the number of households who are below the low-income measure before tax. And again, that was the 2021 census population, and that apportioned 9% of the calculation.

We then take a look at the number of Indigenous people that form the population by service manager, making sure that we include First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. Again, based on the 2021 census data, that amounts to an 8% factor.

Finally, we also look at the amount of youth in each service manager area between the ages of 16 and 25, and based on the 2021 census population, that was at 4%. That concludes the summary of how we arrive at our funding model.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Angela. Again, just to reiterate, I appreciate the work that you've done, Mr. Holland. But again, the federal-provincial cost-share program for the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit has consistently increased. In 2021, it was increased by \$48.1 million to \$96.8 million in 2022-23, and now \$148.6 million in 2023-24. Consistently, it increases. Presently, it helps just under 17,500 individuals or participant households. We're going to increase that by at least 3,750 in 2023-24. And again, we're working with the federal government, as part of the NHS, to deal with vulnerable populations: for example, women and children fleeing domestic violence.

We've had good success in our negotiations with the federal government. Obviously, we look for partners from all sides of the aisle to support us in getting more dollars to increase COHB. But suffice it to say, Angela has provided you with the rationale that we moved to, as a part of the Auditor General's report—away from things like

historical funding levels, which really doesn't capture Ontario as we know it today.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I really appreciate that. That really clears up a lot of the misconceptions or the questions that were left hanging with regard to the funding formula being used, and I really do appreciate that.

I do note as well that, in Ottawa, which was used as an example of \$800,000, that's an increase, for a total of \$48 million in HPP funding.

Hon. Steve Clark: That's correct. It's the second-highest recipient of funds under the HPP program.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Great. Well, I appreciate the answer, and thank you to the staff for providing that.

On to my question, which, again, I really look—

Hon. Steve Clark: It's good we've covered COHB and HPP. That's good.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Pardon me?

Hon. Steve Clark: We've covered COHB and HPP.

Mr. Kevin Holland: On to my question that I really look forward to hearing your answer on: Due to the severe lack of housing supply, Ontarians across the province are struggling to find a home that fits their needs. This lack of supply is driving up prices across the province and is making the dream of home ownership fall further out of reach for many. It's economics 101: supply and demand, basically.

Can you tell this committee what our government is doing to help cut red tape and get more homes built faster?

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks for the question. Our government understands the urgency of the housing supply shortage. We literally hit the ground running in 2018 and realized that we needed to move forward and put a plan in place. If we don't act, we're going to have a generation of Ontarians who are never going to have the same opportunities for stability and success that their parents have had. So we've committed, as a government, to cut red tape, to get shovels in the ground faster and to really deal with our critically low housing supply.

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That's why we've introduced the new policies, as I said earlier—our first three housing supply action plans: More Homes, More Choice, which was our first, in 2019; More Homes for Everyone, in 2022; and More Homes Built Faster, later in 2022. The policies have really helped to substantially increase housing starts in recent years—as I said earlier in testimony, we had our largest since 1987 in 2021. Last year, we had our largest ever in purpose-built rental—over 15,000 starts.

And that's why, in April of this year, we introduced the newest plan, which we entitled Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants. We wanted to accelerate the progress that we've done on our previous plans. As part of this, we've proposed to take the two planning documents, which are our Provincial Policy Statement and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and put them into one document. It would streamline the planning process to increase housing supply, to speed up planning approvals by simplifying the existing planning

policies, making them more flexible, making them more supportive to building new housing.

Again, everything we've done—all the things I've just mentioned—is with one goal in mind, and that's to get more housing built in Ontario. I believe simplifying and consolidating the two plans into a single document is going to help us work to reduce red tape and accomplish that “getting shovels in the ground faster” that I've said many, many times.

We're making changes to the building code, as Associate Minister Tangri talked about, to unlock housing, to reduce barriers, to speed up housing construction. The changes make it easier to use innovative construction materials and techniques that are going to save people money. We've also streamlined modular, multi-residential building requirements so they can get quickly assembled and quickly occupied—those innovative approaches I think many of us have talked about in our own ridings as part of our numerous consultations on the Housing Supply Action Plan. We want to increase home ownership. We want to increase housing supply. We need more tiny homes. We need more second units, laneway housing. Really, our plans take advantage of both new and existing components, things like transit, to ensure that we have adequate height, better density. We need to build around major transit stations. Building more gentle density is also a way that we can use infrastructure that's already in place. We want to encourage municipalities to take advantage of our proposals and implement them quickly. That's why we keep building on them and, again, ensuring that Ontarians can see the impact in years to come.

We're committed, as I said earlier, to introducing a housing supply action plan each and every year in this renewed mandate because we know that more action needs to take place and because we also know that there's no silver bullet—there's not one thing that we're literally going to do and snap our fingers and have a million and a half homes built. We've got to do multiple things and build upon the success of our previous plans. But we can't do it alone. We need municipalities and we need the federal government to work with us to help implement our plan moving forward.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you. I'll share my time with MPP Sarrazin.

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

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you, Minister Clark and Associate Minister Tangri and the whole team for presentations. It's quite interesting.

I know our government has often talked about working with all levels of government to solve this big housing crisis. Can you tell us about Ontario's partnership with municipalities and the success you have been having working with them on this important file?

Hon. Steve Clark: We've got some great municipalities in Ontario. Ontario's 444 municipalities are really critical partners in our housing supply action plan and ensuring that the responsibilities and the essential ser-

vices that municipalities provide continue and are strengthened. They help our government to tackle very complex issues like building housing, supporting growth, reducing traffic gridlock and improving transit networks. You know, because you sat around at council table for a number of years—so did I, both when I was mayor at 22, and then later in life, before I got elected MPP, as a CAO. We talked about housing-related issues when I was president of AMO as well, and I think every president of AMO that preceded me and succeeded me has used this as an opportunity to drive some of those municipal priorities forward.

As minister, I applied the experience that I had, both as a mayor and a CAO, to cultivate and continue the very strong relationships that our municipal partners have with our government to move forward. Over the last five years that we've been in government and in office, I've had the pleasure to be able to meet with the heads of councils, councillors, municipal staff at a variety of meetings—both formal meetings, things like the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, their annual AMO conference, but also other conferences like ROMA. We just finished what I call conference season, because we've had NOMA and FNOM and OSUM. I was also at the OMAA conference, as well, with managers.

We're so pleased, I think, as a government to be able to have such a strong showing at conferences like AMO. Really, my ministry, my associate, my parliamentary assistant and all of my colleagues across government had, I think it was, 570 meetings with municipalities and municipal organizations at the 2022 AMO conference, so really solid engagement: all ministries and all MPPs really connecting.

There are a lot of key priorities that I think are going to surprise none of you, because you were all basically there: things like economic recovery issues, infrastructure, public health, housing, homelessness supports, transportation. I always go back and forth with the Ministers of Transportation and Infrastructure to see which one of the three of us get the most delegation requests, because those are the three that seem to be focused on at the AMO meeting. As well, we had a really strong delegation at the ROMA conference in 2023—really excited to get back in front of people. We had about 320 delegation meetings at that conference.

As I said at the start, municipal officials and elected officials play a critical role in helping us build those 1.5 million homes by 2021. We're pleased, on the housing pledge side, to receive nearly every one of our largest and fastest-growing bigger communities that have signed on to the housing pledge. In fact, many of them have actually signalled their intention to far exceed what we've established for them as a housing strategy. We appreciate all of the work municipalities are doing to plan for growth. We know that collaboration—not just in adopting the pledges, but in following up with some concrete action—is very important if we're going to make that 1.5-million-homes goal by 2031, to be able to get shovels in the ground and get all of the approvals for housing to be done.

Our government believes very strongly, as I know you do as a former municipal official, that a partnership with municipalities is really key for us to build a safe, strong, both rural and urban community with a dynamic local economy. I think having a good quality of life, a very strong and pragmatic housing policy that provides affordable and suitable homes for their residents is going to be key.

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Let's go back to the last municipal election. We've just had three elections—federal, provincial and municipal—in a fairly short period of time. But I don't believe that I've ever seen in my lifetime—and my first election as mayor goes back to the early 1980s. I've never seen an election like we had in the fall municipally where housing was so top of mind. I remember my own mayor in my own home city of Brockville saying the top three issues in the election were housing, housing and housing. I think that's really indicative of the fact that many, if not all, of our municipal partners want to do their part. We need them to do their part.

And having just finished the provincial and territorial meeting in Ottawa with Ministers of Municipal Affairs and having the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, the federal housing and diversity minister, speak—we all want to work together. We all want to make sure that that new accelerator fund comes through municipalities and the province so that we don't sell ourselves short and—

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

Hon. Steve Clark: —we don't ensure that we're not successful. That certainly came forward over the last few days in Ottawa.

There's also some interest in the strong-mayor powers—something that we've done in Ontario and hasn't been done in some of the other provinces. There were quite a few questions by some of my colleagues in other provinces and territories about what we're doing here in Ontario. I think one of the things that's different is the fact that we have 444 municipalities, so we need to ensure that that level of government works with us.

That's everything we're doing. We're trying to make sure that they're set up for success, that everything we do—whether you live in a small town or a big city, whether you're in a rural area or whether you're in an urban region—we set you up for success and that you've got all the tools you need to ensure that we get shovels in the ground faster.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We'll now move over to the official opposition for their next 20 minutes. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to start off by reading into the record some questions I'd like the ministry to answer, to provide answers to the committee following the estimates process, and I'm just going to read them into the record now:

Please inform the committee how many affordable housing units, non-market housing units and co-op housing units are being built each year in Ontario and what definition of "affordable" is being used in those situations.

Please provide the committee the specific allocations for each municipality and service manager under the Homelessness Prevention Program 2023-24 as well as the formula or methodology used to determine these allocations.

Please provide to the committee the specific allocations for each municipality and service manager under the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit Program for 2022-23 and 2023-24 as well as the formula or methodology that was used to determine that.

Please provide to the committee a summary of what services are projected to be cut or reduced because the MMAH's budget has dropped from \$1.56 billion in actual spending to \$1.445 billion in projected spending year over year.

Can the ministry provide the committee with an answer on whether Ontario tracks the number of people who are homeless in Ontario? And if they do, what is that number?

And then finally, can you provide the committee with MMAH's possible plan to transition to just funding the construction of homes and having the MOH—the Ministry of Health—take over all program funding, including support for living in the homes?

Some of these questions came from stakeholders who have genuine concerns. They've raised these issues to the ministry or they've heard about these concerns through the cities, and they really do want some specific answers. Given that my time is limited to approximately 40 minutes, which is a pretty truncated estimates process, I am just going to read them into the record.

Now I'm going to go to the specific questions I have to the minister, the associate minister and staff who are here. The first question I have is about Bill 23, and it's related to the decision by this government to move forward with Bill 23 and cut development fee funding by approximately \$5 billion overall. This is an estimate provided by AMO. That \$5-billion funding would have gone to providing funding for capital infrastructure for primarily new developments. So we're talking sewage, roads, parks, daycares, shelters and more.

In a letter to AMO, Minister Clark said, "We are committing to ensuring municipalities are kept whole for any impact to their ability to fund housing enabling infrastructure because of Bill 23." It's on the record; it's a public letter. What concerns me is that when I look at the estimates, I see that there has been an overall cut in how much funding is going to municipalities in the coming year. It looks like when you combine operating and capital, there will be a cut of \$245 million. That's on page 21.

If there's going to be a cut to how much municipalities get and municipalities are going to be hamstrung in their ability to collect developer fee revenue, then I really am curious: What is the government's plan to make municipalities whole? And when are municipalities going to be made whole? That's a question to the minister.

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair, I've been in estimates, as you know, many times. It's an interesting tactic to try to ask four hours' worth of questions in a 20-minute rotation. We

are here. We are prepared as a ministry to answer a question—

Ms. Jessica Bell: And I've asked you a very specific question, Minister: How are you going to make municipalities whole?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: I think we want to clarify something with the Clerk, so I'll ask the deputy to ask her a question.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll just stop the clock, MPP Bell, to clarify.

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: MPP Bell, when we come back, I can speak to those changes in the ministry allocation. I have them here.

But I have a point of clarification for the Clerk about the ministry's obligation. MPP Bell asked a series of questions, I think most of which we can answer in the room. Is there an opportunity for us to answer in the room? Are we obliged to take those away? I'm not clear, as the deputy, what the process is.

Hon. Steve Clark: We're here to answer the questions. So if she decides that she's going to read them into the record and not want an answer for them, I'm not compelled to provide an answer.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Two things: I'm happy to move a motion to extend the time for estimates today. I'm happy to do that. Second, I had a very specific question that I asked you, which was—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP Bell, we have a time allocation. You did ask a lot of questions. The ministry has offered to answer.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Sure. But my specific question right now is about Bill 23.

Hon. Steve Clark: You had, like, 10 questions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister, are you looking at making municipalities whole? That's a specific question I'm asking you now. Are you looking at making municipalities whole, and if so, when?

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair, if I might, the member knows that we've indicated, as part of that commitment, that we will be providing audits in a select group of municipalities. We've announced that we're in the middle of a procurement for those audits. The audits have not started yet. The audits will form a basis of our response. It will help us better understand the impacts in our municipal partners. We have not indicated that those audits have begun. We're still in the process of acquiring those types of services.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So what I hear from that answer is that there is no clear commitment today that you are looking at making municipalities whole, and there's no clear time frame—

Hon. Steve Clark: No, that's not correct. We indicated—

Ms. Jessica Bell: Are you going to make municipalities whole?

Hon. Steve Clark: I answered the question very clearly: that to better understand the impact of Bill 23, we announced that we would audit a select group of municipalities. We are in the middle of procurement of those auditors. We will announce, once procurement is

over, who they are. That process will help inform us on a future path forward in terms of impacts of Bill 23 on municipalities.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Chair. My second question—

Hon. Steve Clark: It's a very clear answer.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have no idea when and no idea how. My second question—

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: No, I'm asking a question now. I'm taking back my time.

My next question is about the definition of “affordable housing.” In Bill 23, the Conservative government chose to upend the definition of “affordable housing” that has been used by the province and the federal government for some time, which is that a home is affordable based on how much the person who lives in that home is able to pay, about 30% of rent geared to income is approximately what it is.

1520

Now the government has chosen to move to a new definition of affordable housing which is based on market rates—about 80% of average market rent and 80% of what it would cost to buy a home in a specific area—which is concerning, because many housing experts are saying that that's not a definition of affordable housing at all, especially since the government is looking at giving very big developer-fee discounts if a developer meets that new definition of housing, and it's only if they meet it for 25 years. So that's a concern.

This is my specific question: Is the ministry tracking affordable housing starts, missing middle starts, co-op housing starts and non-market housing starts? Are you tracking that in the province currently? And if you are, what are they?

Hon. Steve Clark: We're working with all of our partners. Obviously, Bill 23 was a new policy for us in terms of incenting the type of housing we want. We want more family-size rentals, we want more non-profits, and we want more attainable—so we decided, as a government, that as part of Bill 23, we were going to incent those development fees.

I appreciate that the member who asked the question—her party is always going to stand up for higher fees and higher charges.

We're going to work with the sectors as they work with municipalities on these types of developments, and as we move forward, we're going to build upon our success, and in terms of ensuring—but all of our policies, whether it be right from More Homes, More Choice in 2019, were there to incent all different types of housing. We need all types of housing, right from tiny homes to high-rises.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Specifically, I'm asking you if you track it or not. It's a simple question: Do you track it or not?

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: Minister, let me assist.

There is a new regulation that is in process which requires municipalities to gather data, and they—

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have it right here.

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: Great.

Municipalities, going forward—we will be able to collect standard data across a range of metrics.

Thank you for indicating that you're aware of the regulation.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The challenge is that I do not see any requirement to track non-market housing, affordable housing, co-op housing or supportive housing in that regulation.

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: Let me ask a colleague if they can assist with that specific question. Thank you.

Mr. Sean Fraser: My name is Sean Fraser. I'm assistant deputy minister, planning and growth, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Some of the data that the member has asked about, the ministry tracks through information we receive from MPAC. They have some of the core data. We also will be obtaining some of this data through the new reporting regulation, but not all of the data that you've talked about.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for that answer. I appreciate it. I'm pleased to know that it's being tracked in some way through MPAC. We'll make sure to follow up.

My next question is about tracking homelessness rates. The reason why this is so important is because it is difficult to track the number of people who are homeless. We also know that the homelessness rate is on the rise, not just in big cities, but in smaller towns too; in smaller cities; in Thunder Bay; many northern towns as well.

My specific question is this: Does the ministry track homelessness counts across Ontario and work with municipalities to collect them, and if so, what are you finding?

Hon. Steve Clark: One of the surprises I had when I became minister five years ago was the differences that our 47 service managers and our two Indigenous program administrators had when it came to homelessness enumeration. I remember pressing “pause” as we reviewed how we managed the file.

We made a decision, as a government, to engage the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and to work with all of our 47 service managers on a by-name list that was consistent across all 47, to ensure that we didn't have some using one type of methodology and others using something completely different. I'm pleased that all of the ministry officials worked with our 47 service managers to ensure that everybody is on the same page. Recently we re-engaged the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness to continue to work with service managers as we implement policies in the province.

Ms. Jessica Bell: So just to be clear—I just want to summarize: What I'm hearing is that you are tracking homelessness counts in partnership with the Canadian alliance for homelessness. Is that correct?

Hon. Steve Clark: Every service manager uses the same metrics for a by-name list. You should know, because your party opposed it.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I will make sure to follow up on that, because I do work with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, and what I'm hearing from you is that you

do track it. If you do track it, it would be good if those numbers—the homelessness counts in specific areas—were provided to this committee.

I'm going to go to my next question.

Hon. Steve Clark: Each service manager—

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm going to be going to my next question, and it's the issue of—

Hon. Steve Clark: Chair? I just want to clarify that each service manager has those numbers.

Ms. Jessica Bell: He's answered the question, yes.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): So they do have those numbers. You're choosing not to hear the numbers at the moment then. Is that correct?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I asked the ministry if they track it, and they have provided an answer. I can follow up with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness to see what that specifically looks like.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My next question is about the building code. The reason why I'm interested in the building code is that we know, through the regulatory process, that Ontario is updating its building code and that the plan is to release an updated building code so that it's in alignment with the federal building code in the summer.

The reason why this is important is because we've had organizations reach out to us who have got valid concerns about the building code standard and whether inspectors are effectively doing their job to ensure building code standards are met. The reason why is because we have had some high-profile instances of condos collapsing or not being safe for people to move in. These have been in the news. There was a case in Niagara Falls and London and Welland.

My question is, what is your ministry doing to ensure that the Ontario building code is being fully upheld at all building sites so we don't have a repeat of a condo collapsing in the future?

Hon. Steve Clark: Ontario's building code really establishes very high standards for construction to minimize the risk to the health and safety of the public. It addresses fire safety, accessibility, structural sufficiency. It ensures the building integrity and performance. It also promotes water and energy conservation.

As most of you know, municipalities are responsible for enforcing the Building Code Act and the building code within their own jurisdictions. We update the building code regularly through both interim amendments to reflect things like technological advancements, expert research, government priorities and also input from stakeholders. Large-scale reviews are undertaken about every five years to align with regular updates of the national building code.

Sean, did you want to continue?

Mr. Sean Fraser: I was just going to add some additional information on the qualifications aspect of the building code.

The ministry has embarked on a program to do some significant changes to the qualifications process specifically to get more building officials, because that's one of

the key issues—municipalities needing to get more building officials. So work is being done on that in Ontario through the programs, various qualifications and doing things like making the building code digital so that it's more accessible, they can more efficiently work and we can attract the next generation of building officials. There's a concerted effort on the qualifications piece and, as the minister mentioned, we're working through the harmonization process, which is the actual standards in the building code, working towards the next edition of the building code and ensuring that Ontario maintains its primacy in terms of the highest standards in the country.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that. The reason why I raise that question is because we are getting calls and emails from—not just from it being in the news that a condo is collapsing, but we're also having new home buyers moving into homes and not finding that they're up to standard, and they're very concerned that the building code is not being properly enforced. I can imagine you're getting those calls too, and it is a very big issue. You can imagine: Someone is spending upwards of \$1 million on a new home; they want to make sure that, when they move in, it's well built.

My next question is also around the building code review, and that is around accessibility and the need to move forward with universal design, which means that a new home is fully accessible for people who have disabilities, are in a wheelchair, have difficulty easily moving around in their home. The current standard is that 15% of new buildings are visitable, which means someone in a wheelchair, who has a disability can visit, but there's not a requirement that they're fully accessible for the inhabitant.

1530

What is your position—this is my question—when reviewing the building code on ensuring new homes are fully accessible, especially homes in multi-purpose buildings: those purpose-built rentals, those condos?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Again, as part of the next edition of the building code, accessibility will be one of the areas that the ministry is looking at, both on the harmonization front as well as on maintaining the high standards that Ontario has now and maintaining that high position relative to the rest of the country, looking at ways in which improvements can be made. It is important to recognize that there are a number of factors when considering what goes into the building code. Certainly accessibility is one, but cost, complexity and the impact on things like housing supply are also factors that need to be considered. So it balances a range of factors to arrive at standards which try to meet all of those provincial interests.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay, so what I'm hearing from that is that there's no clear targets at this point. There's more of a need to maintain what we have, but not necessarily improve.

From the seniors' groups I'm communicating with, they are having difficulty finding homes that are accessible, that meet universal design. They're worried about what will happen when they get older and their mobility is

limited. They really want to downsize, or have more options to downsize, into rentals and home ownership, mainly condos—into places they can live in for as long as they can. And they're having difficulty finding those accessible homes. So that's a specific request.

The other question that I had is around what we are seeing in the housing sector, which is a rise in illegal short-term rentals and illegal mid-term rentals. The reason why I raise this is because a new study came out showing that there are upwards of 11,000 short-term rentals in Toronto alone that are listed for 28 days or more, so they're flouting city rules that require homes to be registered if they are for 28 days or less. From what we're hearing anecdotally, many of these short-term rentals are not in someone's primary residence—which people don't have a problem with. They're in investment properties.

We're also hearing about these issues not just in Toronto but all across the province. In Oro-Medonte, we've had groups contact us there; in Ottawa, it's becoming an increasingly big issue.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: So my question is this: When I read the Residential Tenancies Act, it seems pretty clear to me that these short-term rentals and mid-term rentals shouldn't be allowed. Are you looking at investigating and cracking down on short-term rentals and mid-term rentals in investment properties, especially in municipalities that are already banning them?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Municipalities have their own short-term rental bylaws, so I'm not sure—I don't understand—

Ms. Jessica Bell: These municipalities are saying that the Residential Tenancies Act is what should apply in these situations.

Hon. Steve Clark: So if a municipality has the responsibility to create their own short-term rental bylaw, is the member suggesting that she wants us to intervene in that creation? I'm not sure what she's suggesting.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, I'm so pleased that I can clarify. Many municipalities are saying that it's the Residential Tenancies Act that should apply here, and that's provincial.

Hon. Steve Clark: But presently, the municipalities have that responsibility—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry, that's the end of this round. I'm sure MPP Blais would love to get in. We're not going to start you quite yet. The Clerk is just going to read a clarification into the record.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Isaiah Thorning): Just for the benefit of the committee members as well as ministry staff who are tracking outstanding questions in these proceedings, what exactly an "outstanding question" is is when a member raises something during an estimates hearing and the ministry has explicitly committed to providing a future response. So to be a little bit more clear, the only questions the ministry is committed to answering are outstanding questions that they have endeavoured to respond to.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): And now we'll move on to MPP Blais for 10 minutes, please.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Just to come back to where I was in my last round, what real-time measures is the ministry using or looking at to track policy implementation at the municipal level, to ensure that the goals that the government has for Bill 109, for Bill 23 etc. are actually implemented?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Member Blais, the primary new tool that the ministry has brought on board is regulation 73/23. This is the new regulation that was filed in April. It is in effect and, starting at the end of this month—this summer, basically—we will begin receiving quarterly information from the 29 large and fast-growing municipalities on development approval activity, from the early stages of the development approval activity through to the full continuum. Also, we will be receiving geospatial information annually to give a much better baseline and metric.

Mr. Stephen Blais: So you will be using the data received from municipalities based on regulation 73/23 as the basis for your public reporting on your success towards achieving the 1.5 million homes? Is that correct? Did I understand that correctly?

Hon. Steve Clark: As I've said many times, there's not one thing, so we need to be able to, as a government, continue to be able to put legislation forward and course-correct based on market conditions.

There are things, like I've said, that are out of my control, right? We've faced incredible inflationary pressures. We've had a change in the economy. We want to make sure that we can continue to build upon the success, and the regulation that Mr. Fraser is talking about is one of those tools that will move forward.

I'm not going to say that we might not add something additionally, based on the information before the government of the day. We're just going to continue to build upon what we've done as a government so far.

Mr. Stephen Blais: That's fine. I guess what I'm trying to get at is what data will be used and applied consistently so that we can hold the government accountable towards the promises you've made. In your own documents, you have one line talking about homes completed; later down on the page, you have housing starts, which, Minister, you referenced as your—

Hon. Steve Clark: I only used housing starts.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Okay, but your document has homes—

Hon. Steve Clark: No one is going to be using completions.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, your estimates document has homes completed as a proof point of success—

Hon. Steve Clark: I speak for what I use. I use starts.

Mr. Stephen Blais: From my understanding, the government believes it will be held accountable on housing starts. Is that housing starts number coming from regulation 73/23, or is it coming from CMHC, or is it coming from MPAC? Because all three have been referenced today.

Hon. Steve Clark: The CMHC numbers are the most up-to-date numbers that we've got. What we haven't yet dealt with is the new immigration targets and how that impacts future decisions by the government on housing supply. But suffice it to say, the CMHC numbers are the best data that we've got so far to date.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Okay. So, based on the, I presume, CMHC data which your ministry has published in your estimates document of 96,080 homes that started construction in Ontario in 2022, as I've mentioned, that is just a little over half of what the annualized target should be, which means we're now playing catch-up across the province to achieve the 1.5 million homes. As has previously been mentioned, municipalities are already having a hard time keeping up with both the front-end planning processes, but also the building inspections and occupancies coming after.

With fee reductions or charge reductions that are being imposed by the government, how do you propose the city actually do all that administrative work to get the houses started and then eventually inspected and occupied?

Hon. Steve Clark: Well, the whole point—obviously, as someone who was a former mayor and a former CAO, those new houses provide tax dollars to the municipalities, so there are obviously natural benefits by growth in a community. We have, over the last three years, been very on the ground with municipalities about ensuring that they have the tools, whether it be the Audit and Accountability Fund, the Streamline Development Approval Fund, the Municipal Modernization Program. We were very clear that we wanted municipalities to use these funds to get ready to help us get shovels in the ground faster.

My hope is that a city like your own has taken that time, taken those dollars and been able to put a plan in place to help implement our plan moving forward.

1540

Obviously, there was a political will among Ottawa council to pass the housing pledge. They felt very strongly that they were able to, with their existing complement of staff, with their existing official plan, meet those needs. So I don't see the concern that perhaps you're suggesting. Again, I was in your city yesterday. I had breakfast with the mayor. He was very excited about working with the government on housing supply. He was very excited with the \$24 million we just gave him for a wonderful Ottawa Community Housing project. The associate minister and I were there. It was well received at city hall by council and staff. We will continue to work with communities like your city in Ottawa, your mayor and your council, to help them and help them make sure they've got the tools to get the job done.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Our mayor is running a \$39-million deficit this year, following COVID and following projections and implications from various pieces of government legislation. So how is the government proposing to address the budget gap in the city of Ottawa and other municipalities?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, I'm not going to dissect the Ottawa budget. It's not part of my estimates. So I'm not going to take that bait from the member—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Okay, perfect. Well, you've answered the question. I appreciate that.

You've committed to making municipalities whole from Bill 23. You've discussed already how you have a procurement process for the audit function. Presumably, that's going to take some time. The audit function is going to take some time. Meanwhile, municipalities will, presumably, if estimates are correct, be in a position of deficit by the end of the year, which they're not allowed to carry. Right?

How is the government going to accommodate or account for that reality and the catch-up that will be needed if a decision is made to make them whole?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, not all the development charges are encompassed by what was proposed in Bill 23. It was a very distinct set of types of housing that would result in development charge deferral, reduction or complete relief. Again, I have full confidence in our procurement process. I believe that we'll be able to provide this procurement, get in, do the audits and have a clearer picture for municipalities. I don't foresee that there will be an issue moving forward.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Okay. One of the complaints that is perpetual, I think, for municipalities, and certainly from those seeking to lead them, is the challenge with MPAC data as it relates to municipal elections and the running of municipal elections. I believe—and Minister, you can correct me—your government is committed to trying to make changes to the way municipal elections have taken place or will take place in the future. I'm wondering if you can update us on what progress is being made and where we stand following last year's election.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm not sure what you're referring to.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, I understood that there was going to be analysis done or a review of the data from MPAC and whether or not different data should be used as part of the municipal election.

Hon. Steve Clark: First of all, every election that we have with the municipalities, we review what happens during the election. So if I understand your question correctly, we do review—

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

Hon. Steve Clark: —after every municipal election. Normally, a government—and I can only speak for the last four years—has, prior to the next municipal election, a small tweak in legislation, based on past practice. I don't know what that would be, because the review—we literally just had the election late last year. So we will continue to work with what we've seen. There are municipal audit committees that are still reviewing data and still looking at what happened in their election, so we will continue to work with the municipal service offices throughout the province and we will gather data.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: Sorry, just to add, MPP Blais: My colleague was able to—there is a process that's under way in terms of the role of the Chief Electoral Officer and voters list.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Yes.

Ms. Kate Manson-Smith: It just took us a minute to figure that that's what you were referring to. Yes, that process is under way.

Mr. Stephen Blais: So if you could commit to informing us of what progress is being made—

Hon. Steve Clark: I would suggest that you speak directly to the Chief—

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

We're going to move over to the government side. MPP Pang, would you begin?

Mr. Billy Pang: Minister, Associate Minister, Deputy Minister and the MMAH team, good afternoon. Thank you for your hard work for Ontarians.

Hon. Steve Clark: You're welcome.

Mr. Billy Pang: I can still remember that 23 years ago, I bought my first condominium.

Hon. Steve Clark: Oh, wow.

Mr. Billy Pang: I double-checked today: The listed price is four times higher. I think it's good news for sellers but not for buyers.

We understand that the affordability crisis is top of mind for our government. With the increasing cost of living, we are seeing more Ontarians turning to food banks and shelters. It's also making it more difficult for some families to keep a roof over their heads.

Can the associate minister tell this committee about the funding we have provided to support those who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you, MPP Pang. It's a very, very important question. I think we all understand and agree on all sides of the House that everybody deserves a roof over their head. Collectively, we're working with all of our partners across the province to keep especially those most vulnerable members of our society safe and housed.

The government provides funding to service managers and Indigenous program administrators—and I will refer to them as the IPAs going forward—through what we have as the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program. What this does is help those people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The service managers and the IPAs have the flexibility to choose the best way to use this provincial funding for programs and for services that address and prevent homelessness in their own specific communities. For example, you have rent supplements, homeless shelters and also supportive housing.

Through budget 2023, we're supporting those who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness by increasing our government's investment in these programs by well over \$200 million annually to provide more people not just with a place to call home but hope for a better life. This investment represents an over 40% increase in funding supporting vulnerable people in our province and

brings Ontario's total yearly investment in homelessness prevention programs to almost \$700 million. This is the absolute most we've ever invested and is in addition to the \$4.4 billion we invested over the past three years to enhance and grow community and supportive housing to include addressing homelessness and also to respond to COVID-19.

We also very recently announced almost \$770,000 to help the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. We want to work with them and the communities to help those people, for example, who are experiencing or, again, are at risk of experiencing homelessness so that they can be connected to the local services and supports that are unique to them. Those funds will be used to provide ongoing support to managers so that they can maintain and improve local by-name lists. These by-name lists are real-time lists of people experiencing homelessness that can also identify an individual's needs. The list helps service managers understand the extent of homelessness in their communities, and it will also improve access to these resources—for example, housing and support services—as soon as they become available.

In addition to that, shovels are in the ground across the province building more non-profit and affordable housing, thanks to the changes that we've made under the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022. In fact, we've introduced dozens of new policies under our four housing supply action plans that will really spur the development of a range of different housing options, including, of course, purpose-built rental. These policies have helped substantially increase housing starts in recent years, and we know more housing supply means more choice and, of course, lower costs for all Ontarians.

Once again, thank you, MPP Pang, for that question.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you very much for your answer. I can still remember, before I got elected as an MPP, there was an experience that—to experience what is homelessness. That night, there was a snowstorm, and I slept on the street to experience what's going on. So that helped me. When I was in Hong Kong, I also experienced that, but it's very different, in a different country.

1550

I think homelessness is a big issue that we need to deal with. Thank you for your great answer.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I think it's just wonderful that it—as the minister said earlier, it was the number one priority that we heard throughout the municipal election, something we've never heard before. They've come onboard. They're working together with us. They're collaborating with us. We will, collectively, as we do—and if we can, hopefully, receive the support of the opposition, we can get it done much faster.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Chair: First, I want to thank the minister, the deputy minister and the entire team for being here on what seems to be a very long day. But let's keep going.

I just wanted to circle back to something. MPP Bell talked about asking the province to make the municipalities whole, but how would this be done without the government performing an audit? That was curious to me, because you need to have the numbers before you can make somebody whole. It was something that I just noticed.

I'm going to talk about a topic that is very popular in many municipalities and in my own area, which is NIMBY—not in my backyard—and I will take it even further and say “BANANA.” We're not talking about the protein or the fruit; we're talking about “build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone.” These are some of the local barriers that really challenge communities to overcome—when they're trying to get more builds going. In politics, we see this on so many local levels, and the Premier has talked about this on many occasions. There's a consensus—we hear it from everyone; people are coming onboard: We need to get more housing built. We realize that there's a housing crisis. However, the attitude is that people don't want it in their backyard—NIMBY and BANANA.

How would the plans put forward by the ministry help reduce NIMBY—and I will put in BANANA, as well—as local councillors tend to block or downscale new developments, especially when it involves new supportive housing, which is so key in our communities? It's very key in my community—and I can see no different from any other municipality or any other location in Ontario.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you, MPP Smith, for the question.

I've witnessed it first-hand. I have a new supportive housing development going on, which is literally seconds away from my former constituency office and less than a kilometre away from my home. We did hear from just a handful of community members who were not supportive of us putting supportive housing in the neighbourhood for those with mental health issues and addictions, but after having great discussions and talking with them, they were very much on side. So I think education is something we need to look at.

We have to understand that municipal councils also play a very crucial role in planning for our housing supply right across the board. That's why some of the measures that we've put in place establish municipal reporting requirements—something that MPP Blais was asking about—for planning application and approvals data.

Our plan is also going to streamline municipal planning responsibilities, and it's going to be removing planning policy and approval responsibilities from certain upper-tier municipalities. There are some areas, like my region of Peel, where we have upper- and lower-tier municipalities, and both levels of government have land use planning policies and roles in some development approvals. This proposal would give local communities more influence over decisions that impact them directly. It will clarify responsibilities and improve efficiencies. This means that local communities, then, can eliminate unnecessary approvals and inhibiting rules such as waiving

site plan control for smaller developments, limiting some types of third-party appeals, and also removing unnecessary requirements to hold very, very lengthy meetings—and I've attended some of those, so I can speak to that.

Our plan also builds on what we have now, our Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, which empowers the mayors of Toronto and Ottawa to move very quickly on shared provincial priorities, with the construction of more housing at the top of the list. We know construction of more housing is critical if all Ontarians are to have a chance at attainable home ownership, and we trust our municipal partners are going to work with us towards that goal. As we keep saying time and time again, we're going to get it done.

I'm going to add that a new acronym that we've been hearing a lot about are now the CAVEs, which are the “citizens against virtually everything.” It's not just homes; it's anything that's proposed by municipal, provincial, federal governments. They just don't want anything to do with it. We have a responsibility as policy-makers to make sure that we support those, especially those who are most vulnerable, to make sure they do have a roof over their head.

Ms. Laura Smith: No, I appreciate that. And, sorry, the acronym was CAVE?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Citizens against virtually everything.

Ms. Laura Smith: Ah. I wonder if they have children.

Hon. Nina Tangri: Long-term thinking: We have to think about future generations and the newcomers to Canada and Ontario as well.

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes, all right. Thank you for the education, because I'm always interested in new acronyms.

How much time do we have?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Nine minutes.

Ms. Laura Smith: Nine minutes? Could I pass over my time to MPP Hardeep Grewal, please?

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you so much, MPP Smith. I just want to quickly start by thanking the minister, the associate minister, the wonderful PA as well as the entire team from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and all of the great work that you guys have done over this last year in terms of supporting Ontarians and building more homes in Ontario. All of that work is well recognized by the people and the members of this side of the House. I just want to thank you guys for all of that.

I just wanted to talk to you guys today about our municipal partners across the province and the type of measures that we're taking to ensure that we support our municipal partners. I know Minister Clark and the rest of the team and the associate minister and the PA have taken on hundreds of meetings with our municipal partners over the last year. I just want to see, as we as a government work closely with them—and our municipal partners are who deliver our critical local services that our communities rely on—to further support them, including the

challenges brought on by the pandemic, can you please tell this committee about the funding we've given to these municipalities in various aspects to help support their growth?

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes, thanks, MPP Grewal, and I echo your thanks to the associate minister and the PA and to the deputy minister and all the team who are here from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today, we had two more bills that got royal assent, so that's six bills that this team has worked on in the last year of our government, and when you go back to the previous term, an additional eight bills. So we've been involved in 14 bills, and I just want to thank the team that's with me today at estimates and with the associate minister and the PA and I all year long for their great work they do—fantastic job, and really just have gone above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to the amount of work we've been able to accomplish. So, just thanks to everybody.

Back to your question: Obviously, I had mentioned earlier that we work very closely with municipalities to support them, to be flexible with them, to give them the tools they need to address pressures from the pandemic to be able to manage their municipality and emerge from some of the pressures such as inflationary pressures post-COVID. During the pandemic, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we partnered with the federal government to deliver, as I said earlier, this historic \$4-billion agreement in municipal support through the Safe Restart Agreement, the funding which was emergency support for COVID-19 financial impacts on municipal operating systems, transit systems and public health. Additionally, in 2021, we provided municipalities with over \$1.3 billion in financial relief above and beyond the Safe Restart Agreement to address municipal COVID-related operating, shelter and transit pressures.

In 2022, we committed to a joint provincial-federal funding of \$632 million for municipalities to support transit and shelters, and it included \$127.5 million towards a fifth phase of SSRF, the social services relief fund—that's the fund I've told some of you that Minister Smith and I announced early in the pandemic. Everybody thought the pandemic was going to be about three weeks long. This is the fifth phase of that commitment, another \$127 million, and then, above that, \$505 million in that time-limited COVID-19 funding for municipal transit systems, which really, again, supported COVID-19-related financial pressures experienced by transit operations in 2022-23.

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But there's a lot more support, MPP Grewal, that we provided municipalities. One of the biggest announcements that was celebrated was when the government effectively doubled the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, or OCIF, to \$400 million annually. The Northern Ontario Resource Development Support Fund, or NORDS program, which provided up to \$15 million annually over five years to support northern municipalities and infrastructure projects—we certainly heard that when we were in Thunder Bay and MPP Holland's home community for

NOMA, and we also heard it in Minister Smith's riding, in Parry Sound, during FONOM. We had \$500 million in unconditional funding through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. In 2023, we supported 389 municipalities primarily in northern and rural communities.

The gas tax program—can't forget about that; that's an extremely important program for municipalities: \$379.5 million to improve and expand public transit in municipalities across Ontario. To make up for reduced gas sales due to COVID-19, the gas tax funding included a one-time additional number of \$80 million, which certainly you would know, being PA in your ministry.

Again, I mentioned earlier the Municipal Modernization Program, the Audit and Accountability Fund and the Streamline Development Approval Fund. The government made available \$350 million to help municipalities implement efficiencies to make projects that allowed planning and development processes to be sped up. And then at the 2023 ROMA conference, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, we announced more than \$900 million in much-needed funds in 2023-24 and 2024-25 through initiatives under the national housing strategy, which will maintain and create more community housing and increased rental affordability, something that our municipal partners celebrated at that ROMA conference. We also have been working very closely with the federal government, and the number I mentioned earlier includes an increase of over \$23 million to help under the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit Program for women and children fleeing violence.

And then, through our 2023 budget, one of our signature announcements during Minister Bethlenfalvy's budget was that investment of additional dollars both to our service managers and also our Indigenous program administrators for that \$202-million expansion of the Homelessness Prevention Program for people who are either experiencing or at risk of being homeless. This was a very important program. The funding can be used by service managers to build new supportive housing units. It's a significant commitment, and the ministry now is investing nearly \$654 million per year through this program.

Again, I'm going to use this opportunity—I just finished the provincial and territorial ministers of municipal affairs meeting in Ottawa—

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

Hon. Steve Clark: We had a meeting of housing ministers last June that the deputy and I were at, and we still have to advocate to the federal government for more dollars based on our core housing need under the national housing strategy. We're being shortchanged. That \$480 million could go a long way toward providing more Canada-Ontario housing benefits for our most vulnerable. It could provide more supportive housing, more affordable rental, more rent supplements, more dollars for our municipal partners to fight on the front lines to provide more opportunities for those who are at the risk of homelessness.

What we do need is other voices out there from the opposition parties to support us. The meeting I just had in Ottawa had governments across the country. There were New Democrat governments. There were Liberal governments. And they all agree: We need more money from the federal government for housing. So we'd really love to have our New Democrats and our Liberals who sit in the House support that like their colleagues do across Canada.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much, Ministers, for a very lively committee consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Standing order 69 requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. Do you guys want a second to leave, or shall we just go through the five votes?

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes, I'll go thank the team.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Okay. It's not a recess, so you guys just go. Thank you very much again. I'm sure you all want to leave.

Are the members ready to vote? I did the intro—sounds good.

Shall vote 1901, ministry administration, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those

opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is carried accordingly.

Shall vote 1902, municipal services, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 1903, local government and planning policy, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 1904, housing program, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

This committee is now adjourned until Monday, July 10, 2023, at 10 a.m.

The committee adjourned at 1607.

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