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(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

F-5

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Restoring Trust, Transparency
and Accountability Act, 2018

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Monday 3 December 2018

**Comité permanent
des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Loi de 2018 visant à rétablir
la confiance, la transparence
et la responsabilité

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Lundi 3 décembre 2018

Chair: Stephen Crawford
Clerk: Timothy Bryan

Président : Stephen Crawford
Greffier : Timothy Bryan

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES**

Monday 3 December 2018

Lundi 3 décembre 2018

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

**RESTORING TRUST, TRANSPARENCY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2018
LOI DE 2018 VISANT À RÉTABLIR
LA CONFIANCE, LA TRANSPARENCE
ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 57, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Good morning, everybody. We're meeting this morning for public hearings on Bill 57. Each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by up to 10 minutes from the committee for questions, divided equally for the two sides.

We also have a translation service. If you need it at any time, it's just on your microphone right here.

**WATERFRONT FOR ALL
WEST SIDE COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): If we could have the first group please come up: the West Side Community Council. If you could please state your organization, we'll start right away. Thank you.

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: My name is Bruce Van Dieten. Thank you so much to the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the opportunity to speak today on Bill 57, specifically schedule 30, amending the Ontario Place Corporation Act to wind up the corporation, and schedule 31, the Ontario Place Corporation Repeal Act, 2018.

I deputate as a representative for Waterfront for All, a citizens' group dedicated to preserving and enhancing the Lake Ontario waterfront as a unique natural and cultural resource for all Ontarians to enjoy. Waterfront for All comprises 30 civic groups from Etobicoke to Scarborough. I also deputate on behalf of its member group, the West Side Community Council, representing 11 community associations, from University to Roncesvalles, from Lake Ontario to Bloor. It's a lot of people.

Ontario Place is comprised of 52 publicly owned acres of surface land, and when including the watercourses and

marinas, the area rises to 154 acres. Ontario Place sits on some of the most precious and beautiful land on the shores of Lake Ontario, conveniently accessible to millions of Ontarians. Thanks to its proximity to the 192 acres of Exhibition Place, there is an outstanding opportunity for the city of Toronto and the province, working together, to create a crown jewel of urban waterfront which Ontarians, and the world beyond, will celebrate for generations to come.

The Ontario Place Corporation Act, OPCA, section 8, establishes as objectives for the Ontario Place Corp., among others: (a) the operation of Ontario Place for cultural, educational, research and public purposes; (b) developing projects and programs designed to provide the people of Ontario with a greater appreciation of the province and its accomplishments and potential, and providing talented artists in the province with the opportunity to exhibit their works and their abilities; and (c) developing special programs to enhance the image of the province.

These objectives of the corporation reflect the founding vision behind Ontario Place, the vision of Bill Davis and John Robarts. This founding vision is ambitious, future-oriented, generous, public-spirited and environmental, benefits all Ontarians and, in its celebration of Ontario, ties us all together and connects us to the world. The vision was realized through the creation of the Ontario Place lands, by the public, for the public, now and for the long term. In the pursuit of this founding vision, these lands, under public ownership, are an irreplaceable asset.

Moreover, sustaining and building on this founding vision is the responsible way forward. First, it is fiscally responsible. The economic benefits of singular public spaces, like Central Park in New York City or the Millennium Park in Chicago, are by now so widely recognized as to be beyond dispute. The waterfront access of Ontario Place, its intertwining landscaping and spectacular architecture, from Trillium Park to the Cinesphere, is an amenity unparalleled elsewhere.

Secondly, it is fiduciarily responsible. Ontario Place was built by the taxpayers and continues to be owned by the taxpayers. We believe that procedural due diligence in any process by which the founding vision is significantly altered requires accountability to the taxpayers' right to know, to understand and, most importantly, to be consulted.

In recent years, the founding vision may have become blurred, but this is not a reason to give up on the vision;

rather, to reassert it and strengthen it, among other things, (1) working with stakeholders province-wide to develop strategies for restoring the Ontario Place Corporation Act objectives to contemporary relevance; (2) following through on the implementation of one of the many joint master plans with Exhibition Place—there are many of them; (3) adopting a joint transportation plan for Ontario Place and Exhibition Place—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: —and (4) appointing a new board to include community members from the surrounding area to take advantage of intensification.

We are therefore alarmed at the proposed repeal of the Ontario Place Corporation Act, the dissolution of the corporation and the transfer of the Ontario Place lands to the crown in right of Ontario. We want to know: Does the government support the founding vision of Bill Davis and John Robarts? Does the government think it is worthwhile for Ontario to continue to hold this irreplaceable waterfront jewel, created and sustained by the taxpayers for generations to come, for public purposes and to celebrate Ontario?

In our view, the founding vision deserves Ontario's support, now and for the indefinite future, because we can create a vision that will see people the world over admire Ontario for its forethought of governance in creating the new Ontario Place. We are confident that the people of Ontario stand with us. We therefore call on the members of the standing committee, on behalf of all the people of Ontario, to amend the proposed Bill 57 to remove schedules 30 and 31.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate your testimony.

We'll now start—five minutes from the opposition side, and I'll make a reminder at one minute when you have one minute left. Mr. Glover?

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes. Thank you very much for your deputation, Bruce. Let's see; there's a lot of things that you touched on. You talked about what you'd like to see. It seemed that public consultation is front and centre and that you want it to remain as a public site. You talked about the financial benefits of it remaining a public site. Can you expand on that a bit?

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: Well, I think it's easiest to look at Toronto vis-à-vis Ontario but to look at the waterfront of Ontario as a continuous jewel that needs to be kept open as public as possible.

Centre Island: If you've ever been, it just gets overwhelmed in the summertime. The eastern beaches are obviously too far away to serve the western end. The western beaches were overtopped last year. They were flooded. There's lots of mitigation that needs to go on. The west island is the terminus point on the west end of the western beaches, and it requires very little imagination to see what a spectacular creation we could make of the western beaches, including Ontario Place, with the right plan in place.

We do not see any significance, any possible relevance, any possible good that could come out of privatizing

Ontario Place or privatizing any part of the western beaches. We'd lose that beach. We'd lose a huge part of the waterfront. We'd lose Ontario Place. We'd lose a huge part of the potential to build that western beaches waterfront. That's what we think is important.

There are many, many studies. I didn't bring any of the studies with me. I can certainly get them to the people if there are any questions of it. There is a number of studies that have shown how the western beaches could be turned into an amazing recreational, naturalized parkland area with a robust Martin Goodman Trail and with all sorts of other amenities that could serve Ontario and Toronto for the next century, if we do it properly.

Mr. Chris Glover: You also mentioned that Bill Davis and John Robarts, when they built Ontario Place, did it in order to celebrate Ontario, and you'd like to see that vision continued.

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Is there an aspect about Ontario that you'd like to see celebrated in a revitalized Ontario Place?

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: Again, my point here is strictly about keeping it in public hands as much as possible. I think the exciting part now is, rather than some top-down view of what Ontario Place should be, we now have a consultation that comes from the bottom up and says, "This is what it should be. What resources do we devote to an Aboriginal theme? What resources do we devote to artistic themes? What resources do we devote to naturalized areas, to parkland, to beaches, to recreation?"

I don't want to make those decisions. I think that's a decision that needs to be a full, broad-based consultation with the public. That's what I'm upset with or concerned with by the repeal that's gone on and the removal of the board and the movement of all decision-making directly into the government's hands without the consultation.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much, Bruce. I want to pick up on that. I know that our Minister of Finance is quoted as saying that we're going to spend a considerable amount of time looking at what we can do there to make the best use of that jewel. Nothing is off the table.

0910

You mentioned that the board of Ontario Place has been replaced without any consultation. Can you speak specifically to your concerns about the fact that there's nothing off the table, that the board has been replaced and that there are concerns about privatization of public lands?

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: We've heard all sorts of speculative possibilities. The most horrible one would be a casino. A casino would be a black hole on the western beaches. It would absolutely atomize the complete concept of an open, public waterfront. But I can't speak to that. I'm not going to suggest for a second that that's on the table; I just—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: —that that would be. What I do want to see is as many proposals that the people of Ontario can look at, be consulted with and approve.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So public consultation is very important. Do you know of any public consultations that happened before the province took over control of the Ontario Place board?

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: No.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: None at all?

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: None.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: How would you like to see those consultations going forward?

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: I think it should be a full, broad-based consultation that starts with the public imagining and envisioning possibilities. There are a number of different proposals that have been put out there. I would love to see those proposals put forward to people. Let them make decisions on which ones make the most sense, and then we can fine-tune and hone things down to an Ontario Place that truly reflects the entire western beaches and the entire province of Ontario, rather than just some privatized “get rid of the cost of Ontario Place” idea from the present government.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We’re now going to turn the questions over to the government side. Ms. Skelly, you have five minutes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Mr. Van Dieten, thank you for appearing here this morning.

You know, I remember Ontario Place. I grew up in northern Ontario, and as a young girl I remember all of the exciting things about Toronto. When you come from north of Sudbury in a town of about 3,000 people, the Exhibition was a big deal for us to come to Toronto. I didn’t have a lot of times that I was able to visit the city, but when I did, of course we went to the Exhibition.

I do recall the very first time going to Ontario Place, and it was quite spectacular. The Cinesphere was original. It was certainly a drawing card. We enjoyed it. My family went on numerous occasions, and it was truly enjoyable—it was for many years. Then, going back—my goodness, it was probably four years ago that I went back to Ontario Place, and I was really surprised at what had happened to it and the condition that it had been left in. It was very disappointing.

We saw, obviously, how it could go from being something that is such a huge attraction, to people not only in Ontario but probably from around the world, to something that was abandoned. It has potential for people outside the region, but I’m sure as a resident it probably played a key role in the day-to-day lives of people in your own community. I would like you to share with me how your experience with living so close to Ontario Place has changed over the course of the years that it has digressed.

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: Thank you so much for that. As a father, I used to take my kids to Ontario Place when they were young enough to enjoy going there. We live very close to Exhibition Place. I actually run a tour of Exhibition Place that’s absolutely free. You’re all invited: December 16 is the next one. We start again in April.

What most people don’t realize is just what incredible attractions both Exhibition Place and Ontario Place really are. What’s happened over the last two years—if you

haven’t been down there, I highly recommend you go. Trillium Park was opened: It’s a seven-acre park on the east island. It’s opened up. It is an absolutely stunning piece of architecture that’s won awards. It’s an indication of what Ontario Place can be.

But what does that matter? How does that impact on the people of Ontario and the people of Toronto specifically? If you look at what’s happened in the city of Toronto north of Exhibition Place—which, again, is north of Ontario Place—70,000 people have moved into that area. What used to be industrial land 50 years ago and post-industrial land 40 years ago or 20 years ago became condos.

Now, to the city’s discredit, I have to say, there just isn’t enough parkland. There’s not enough green space. There aren’t enough dog parks. There aren’t enough places for people to go and play. The only thing that’s wide open or big enough to accommodate the incredible increases in population that we’re expecting—2.5 million more people in 25 years—the only thing we have is the lakefront, and one of the jewels there is Ontario Place. If we do not plan that out to be able to accommodate the millions of people who will want to use Ontario Place in the future for adventure, for artistic purposes, for recreation, for parkland, you name it—if we don’t make that plan now and specifically build that plan out between Ontario Place and Exhibition Place, I fear we’re going to lose an opportunity that we may not get back again.

Ms. Donna Skelly: You’re speaking about the impact of any changes to Ontario Place on Ontario residents, but what about—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Donna Skelly: —what about the impact to residents close to you? How will any changes impact them, the residents of the communities that you represent?

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: The residents of the communities that I represent who are close to the area right now need the space. There just isn’t the space to recreate, to have green space, to have naturalized areas. It’s just not extant within this site.

Mayor Tory, God bless him, has talked about a huge city-building project further west, over the railroad tracks, that would cost \$1 billion. There is one proposal from the western beaches that takes the Humber right over to the west island of Ontario Place; that would be \$400 million. That would create an incredible recreational parkland area. I’m not suggesting that that’s the one that needs to be done, necessarily, but there are so many imaginative, so many brilliant proposals out there that could turn that area of Toronto into a—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much, Mr. Van Dieten. We have to move along. I appreciate your coming here today.

Mr. Bruce Van Dieten: Thank you very much.

ONTARIO HEADWATERS INSTITUTE

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I’d now like to call the Ontario Headwaters Institute, please. If you could just state your name for the record as you speak.

Mr. Andrew McCammon: Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the members of the committee for selecting us to be one of the groups who gets to depute today. I appreciate the opportunity.

My name is Andrew McCammon. I'm with the Ontario Headwaters Institute. We are a science-based NGO with charitable status that concentrates on research, education and best practices.

The Clerk has kindly distributed a brochure, and in that, you will see that we recently received supplementary letters patent; as a result of so many changes in the environment becoming a more holistic approach in the last 20 years, we now also have within our mandate full watershed management, land use planning, natural heritage protection and receiving waters. So we're no longer simply a headwaters organization, but certainly that has been our strength. Many people have suggested we have tremendously increased the profile of headwater health in Ontario. In fact, that was the basis for the bluebelt proposal to significantly expand the greenbelt.

We were very pleased with the platform of the new government of Ontario, particularly with respect to a robust approach to pollution, transparency and accountability. Unfortunately, we are seeing a very thin veneer of lip service being paid to those principles.

The lack of mandate letters to ministers is a significant concern with respect to transparency and accountability. Staff are violating the service protocols to get back to constituents. There are very, very limited areas on substantial portfolios that have received no direction from the new government. That includes the Great Lakes Guardians' Council; Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy; Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring, which is called Protecting Water for Future Generations; and something called the watershed guidance planning document.

Those are significant environmental initiatives that are just in limbo, yet the government is proceeding with a new housing initiative. Those send very unsettling messages to my community, which does not get our phone calls returned and does not get meetings with ministers.

The Clerk also has a letter which we sent to the Premier and three ministers on September 4, co-signed by 15 organizations, that has never received a response, in spite of significant efforts to follow up. The transparency and accountability really need to improve.

0920

But I really want to shift to the trust aspects and I want to speak about schedule 15, changes to the Environmental Bill of Rights and the Environmental Commissioner's office. You cannot legislate trust. My concern is that there is really very little rationale for this schedule. I have colleagues who will be speaking today, and they have legal certification; they're policy experts who will talk at greater length about these issues. In particular, there's an 18-page treatise on the CELA website I would refer you all to detailing the concerns about the change in the mandate, the minimization of the role and how this is taking away the voice of many citizens in Ontario.

That's the substance, but what I'm really concerned about is that this is an omnibus bill—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Andrew McCammon: Thank you, sir.

This is an omnibus bill. There are 48 schedules and there are about 20 speakers today in the public hearings. I just don't think that does a whole lot to expand on trust. I like the AG's office, and, if you haven't read it, read the report on the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. Superb stuff, but it was mandated. The issue about the EBR and the Environmental Commissioner's office is that it has autonomy to respond to and take initiative on its own. I urge you to withdraw schedule 15 from this bill and to begin building and rebuilding trust with the environmental community.

Thank you, sir.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll now start five minutes of questioning from the government side. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you for coming today. By way of background, I was the chair of the federal panel on the Trent-Severn Waterway review back in 2006. Many of these on-the-ground—Headwaters caught my eye, obviously.

I guess I'm trying to understand more about the organization. You talk about operational and connectivity with government, but I'd like to know a little bit more about what Headwaters actually does. I don't have a good scope on the focus of the organization.

Mr. Andrew McCammon: Headwaters has historically really not been covered by very much regulation, particularly from conservation authorities and/or MNRF, so there have been huge policy initiatives to try to redress that. The best one was in the change of the definition of watercourse in the Conservation Authorities Act, 2006. We began to see some action, and conservation authorities in development applications can no longer put small streams underground for the convenience of development.

The real challenge for us is education and having an educated populace, because—I'll be very direct, short and succinct—the real challenge with headwaters is that most of it is in private property. Thank goodness for the stewardship of the farm community. It's hard to legislate repairing and cover for agriculture, but if you look at some of the maps we have on our website, you will see the extensive effect of drainage tile, watercourse straightening and no shade along headwater streams at all. There are really fundamental best practices that we're working on that different sectors need to take responsibility for.

Mr. Doug Downey: And that's the core part of your mandate that you are trying to engage the government on—to have those discussions.

Mr. Andrew McCammon: Yes, sir.

Mr. Doug Downey: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much for being here today. You spoke a little bit about being pleased with some of the promises that our government had made during the election and, of course, one of those promises

was to eventually bring forward a new plan for environmental and conservation stewardship. I'm sure you're familiar that last week we unveiled our plan, which has gotten some very positive reviews from a number of stakeholders. It touches on a number of different pieces: reducing pollution, meeting our Paris targets on time, addressing litter and increasing conservation efforts. We're fairly excited about that, and I'm sure you're also pleased to see addressing some of those areas.

Of course, one of the things that I think our government was elected on was a platform that said that we are going to balance our environmental policy with also recognizing our fiscal situation and recognizing some of the challenges that that entails. I'm just curious: Where do you think, in the environmental portfolio, that our government can find some efficiencies? Because this, to me, seemed like a fantastic way to say, "We're going to move these powers into the Office of the Auditor General. They're still going to exist, they're still going to be able to do their job, but they're going to be able to benefit from those economies of scale." I'm curious if you have thoughts on that or ideas about other places we can find some efficiencies there.

Mr. Andrew McCammon: Well, that's a mouthful. Starting at the end—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Andrew McCammon: One minute. Starting at the end, one of the things that I was unable to find in researching was how much savings the cancellation of the current structure of the ECO and the EBR is going to bring. When you talk about efficiency and cost savings, they're not detailed. Our organization is science-based. We frequently ask of various government initiatives, bills and regulations: What is the cost? As you know, there are very rarely any estimates of what it's going to be to implement anything. So we can't see any cost savings there.

On cost savings, the Clerk has a second handout, the September 4 letter to the Premier. We have expressed a great interest, and some conscious track record from the 15 organizations, to help the government. We think there are huge cost benefits to rationalize some of the offices—MNR with MOECP—but there's no discussion on those things, and no mandate letters.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We've now got five minutes from the opposition side. I'll start with Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much for your testimony and for coming in today. I wanted to talk a little bit about the reporting that has to happen or previously had to happen under the Environmental Commissioner. She was obligated to provide three reports a year and report on very specific criteria. Now, you said you are a science-based organization. The most recent one touched on the water protection framework, the fact that funding is disappearing for that. In relation to water, what role does reporting play and how frequent should that reporting be, in terms of tracking environmental issues?

Mr. Andrew McCammon: That is one of the areas in which, in our letter of September 4 to the Premier and three cabinet ministers, we would follow up by saying that there

are some things that need more money. The water reporting is pretty atrocious. The watershed report cards by the CAs—we've been lobbying for four years to introduce indicators of headwater health into those. There is nobody to go to; it's an internal Conservation Ontario thing.

There are issues with water reporting that we would like to bring to the attention of the Environmental Commissioner. For example, when we did the review of the Oak Ridges moraine and the growth plan several years ago, there were no metrics at all about the deterioration of water health with expanded development. There was some boilerplate on the fact that it's impossible to separate development from some impacts, but there were no reports. The report from the Auditor General's office that I referred to previously is absolutely a template for additional work that we would like to see done by the Environmental Commissioner's office.

Finally, I would suggest that each CA has development guidelines required by O. Reg. 97/04. They run from 50-year-old, 50-page, obsolete documents to state-of-the-art, 202-page, extremely good documents from the bigger CAs. It is absolutely varied highly across the province.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just, then, one last part: Mr. Roberts talked about the environmental plan that his government has brought forward, which actually only requires being reported on every four years. That would put us beyond the time frame of the next election. Is that a reasonable time frame for reporting on environmental issues, in your opinion?

Mr. Andrew McCammon: I am sorry; I missed the question. Do we have time to repeat it?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Do you think that reporting on an environmental plan every four years is sufficient?

Mr. Andrew McCammon: No.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Can you just, in the last time remaining, describe what Ontarians have lost by the Environmental Bill of Rights being taken away through this bill?

Mr. Andrew McCammon: Thank you for the question. I'm going to defer to some of the presentations you're going to hear this afternoon. I would refer you to the 15-page presentation by Mr. Lindgren on the CELA website, which far more effectively articulates the concern. The narrowing of the scope, the narrowing of the mandate, the loss of autonomy, the fact that it's not an independent officer of the Legislature—all these are detailed. He could answer, or other presenters could answer, that far better than I can.

0930

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Can you just say whether you think that the changes in this bill have strengthened people's access to an independent authority on our environmental progress?

Mr. Andrew McCammon: No. We signed two petitions that are circulating with over 6,000—well, that means we're signed twice in 6,000, but it's two petitions. We believe it's a significant narrowing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Also, I would just like to say, you have identified that there have been no cost savings identified. That is my experience as well. Your questions about transparency and accountability and the government putting forward this about cost savings, but none are identified—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Can you just talk about this whole idea that they made these wholesale changes saying that they're about cost savings, but there are no cost savings identified? How was that received by you, by your organizing and by the people, generally, in Ontario?

Mr. Andrew McCammon: Well, I think it's the kind of thing that has a track record of occurring in omnibus bills, both with respect to how it has gotten very thin coverage and there's very little time to discuss. I've suggested that schedule 15 be removed from Bill 57. I think your question alludes to the fact that we need a significant discussion, which also addresses Mr. Roberts's point about where we can find cost savings and not just cost savings, but benefits.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. McCammon.

Mr. Andrew McCammon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We appreciate your testimony.

AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION CANADA

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll now call up Amalgamated Transit Union Canada. Again, if you could please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. John Di Nino: Well, thank you. It's John Di Nino. I'm the president of the Amalgamated Transit Union here in Canada.

Let me start off by saying good morning to the Chair and to the committee.

ATU Canada proudly represents 35,000 transportation professionals across Canada, including thousands of members and properties across Ontario. In particular, we have members who have been employed by Metrolinx, as well as members at other affected transit properties in Toronto, Hamilton, Mississauga, Brampton, St. Catharines, Brantford, Guelph, Barrie and Peterborough.

We come before you today as the strong national voice for the Amalgamated Transit Union in Canada on all issues of Canadian interest, with significant concerns about this legislation and the encroachment and control being exerted by the government over Metrolinx. Amendments to the act serve the purpose of drawing control for the development of transit planning, strategy and control away from a specialized, knowledgeable agency and towards politicians for political interest. It is our central concern that the government wants this control so that it can privatize public transit in Ontario and seize those portions of existing public transit that it wants—notably the TTC subway system.

The bill, first and foremost, transforms Metrolinx from an entity charged with responsibility for transit planning to an agency responsible for carrying out the minister's transit plans. Instead of preparing its own transit plan, Metrolinx is now charged with creating a transit plan conforming with the minister's plan.

Once you look deeper into the bill, it gets worse. Metrolinx's transportation plan presently has to work towards reducing transportation-related emissions of smog and greenhouse gases. This requirement is eliminated in this bill. Why, in 2018, as the world heats up, would any government decide to make it easier to pollute?

What do these amendments do? They further reduce accountability and transparency and further facilitate politically driven privatization projects. These amendments eliminate mandatory public consultation with the public, municipalities, First Nations groups, and unions and workers on the creation and amendments of the transportation plan. These amendments eliminate public scrutiny of Metrolinx's investment strategies and make an agency already closed off from the public even more closed off.

To be fair, we have had concerns about Metrolinx for many years. Amongst our deepest concerns is that Metrolinx has been opaque, unresponsive and secretive in their dealings and decision-making. This culture has made it difficult for our ATU transit professionals and, by extension, our general public.

In addition, Metrolinx has already had far too great an appetite for expensive and unwieldy privatized projects. These amendments would allow a government to force Metrolinx to impose more privatized public transit on Ontario's transit riders.

In conclusion, this is a bill that will allow the government to act with less expertise; act with less consultation; plan without regard to environmental considerations; privatize public assets; and ultimately chop up existing transit.

The government seeks to accumulate this control without telling Ontarians how they intend to wield it. We ask this committee to give these ill-conceived amendments close scrutiny.

Subject to any questions, those are our submissions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start with the NDP for questions. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for being here, and for your testimony. I want to just go right to the schedules. Really, in this omnibus bill, as it has been described, schedule 25 makes significant changes to the Metrolinx Act. The Metrolinx Act is a significant piece of legislation that, as you've described, controls how transportation is being planned and built across our province.

Can you speak a little bit about the perceived lack of consultation on changes that are so significant to the transparency of this important act?

Mr. John Di Nino: Yes. Quite frankly, the Metrolinx Act deals with the integration of transit across the GTHA. What we have seen and what we know is that they're going to try to harmonize fare revenue over 15 or 16 other re-

gions and municipalities. With Presto, there isn't a mechanism in place in which you can integrate fares across the city.

Currently, today, I can ride the TTC from Etobicoke to the zoo for \$3.25 on a cash fare. There is no definitive plan by Metrolinx or Presto on how that fare is going to look. In fact, it's going to cost more, because currently, Presto is charging about 5.6% on every dollar for collection of the fare revenue, which is projected to rise to nearly 10%. Their ultimate plan is going to be fare-by-distance and fare-by-speed, which is going to cost the citizens and the riders of this city and Ontario more to ride for the same distance.

There was no planning and there was no consultation of the transit professionals.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Further to that, can you comment a little bit on—you've talked about the impact that this will have on riders, which is important. Can you talk about the impact that this will have on municipalities and their ability to provide current projects and the status of those, and the costs to municipality with these changes?

Mr. John Di Nino: Our concern is this: In uploading the transit system—i.e., the subway system—how is that going to leave the municipalities vulnerable? How is it going to leave the city of Toronto vulnerable?

The subway system is the money-maker for the TTC. If you upload that, chop it up and privatize it, at the end of the day, the municipality is going to suffer with not enough fare revenue in order to maintain those unprofitable routes. This is not a business for profit; this is a necessity for the public. That is our concern: that uploading is going to starve the infrastructure that is going to allow municipalities to maintain transit.

The real issue should be about funding. We need dedicated funding in the operations of public transit. The TTC is the most efficient transit system in North America, and it makes no sense to chop it up. What we need to do is have a dedicated funding model for operations, and we need a provincial and national transit strategy.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that. I know that in my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, there are significant concerns with the LRT. Can you comment on the role that Metrolinx had played in transit-oriented development and what will happen with that?

Mr. John Di Nino: Yes, that's very interesting. We've seen the same thing here in Toronto with the Eglinton LRT. What we've seen is that they had this master plan; it is years behind schedule. They've expropriated land. They're not going to use that land, and they've put things on hold. There are cost overruns. This is ridiculous.

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In fact, had they sat down with the stakeholders, like the professionals in the transit industry, and had some dialogue, we could sit down at the table and work towards a more efficient and cost-effective strategy.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: You talked about the travel distance from the zoo to downtown.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Chris Glover: If TTC were to adopt a fare schedule by distance, would it disproportionately hit the inner suburbs, like Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke?

Mr. John Di Nino: Absolutely.

Mr. Chris Glover: Can you speak a little bit to that?

Mr. John Di Nino: Well, they're going to be paying more to go the same distance, and it's going to depend on whether you're going to take rapid transit like the subway system or are you going to use the conventional bus system. You will pay more for faster or quicker service.

Mr. Chris Glover: Right, and should there be consultation before any changes are made?

Mr. John Di Nino: Absolutely. One of the major stakeholders here—I come from Local 113—has never been consulted on this matter in terms of upload or Metrolinx or a harmonized regional transit system.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: If you had your way, what changes would you like to see to the schedule, or at all?

Mr. John Di Nino: Ultimately, fund public transit for operations. It's that simple.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. Thank you.

We'll now move to questions from the government side: Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, Mr. Di Nino, for coming in. I just wanted to acknowledge a former colleague of mine, Matthew Green, who is here today as well.

You mentioned Hamilton. Ms. Shaw brought up the LRT. I'm very familiar with it. I'm from Hamilton and I serve the residents of Flamborough–Glanbrook, so I'm very familiar with congestion and how hard it is and tough on people who live in areas outside of Toronto who are trying to get to work destination-to-destination between Hamilton and Toronto or, of course, in Toronto. Often, they will take GO or they will drive in and are required to use TTC.

We know that the TTC does serve people who are coming in from other municipalities. With that in mind, doesn't it make sense that you would have one body that would have oversight over an integrated transit system, allowing people to move more seamlessly, have a more comprehensive approach to moving bodies from—I'm saying—Hamilton, but it could be Grimsby, it could be Niagara Falls if we are lucky enough, Brantford, Durham, all around the area? Would it not make more sense to have a regional approach to transit in light of the fact that we've just adopted, for example, a new acronym? It's new in the last four or five years, and that's GTHA. Hamilton is now pulled into it because it is such an important part of the economy. Doesn't it make sense to have one body overseeing everything?

Mr. John Di Nino: Yes, and I appreciate your comments. I know you were very, very supportive of the Keep Transit Public campaign in Hamilton, and I applaud you for that.

But this doesn't talk about keeping transit public. This bill is about privatization of transit. There has been a huge history where privatization of transit—

Ms. Donna Skelly: If I may, Mr. Chair. I want to go back to the question, though, and that is: Doesn't it make sense—and I see it—and Ms. Shaw raised the LRT. We know how important it is to connect transit right across this region. Is it not more prudent, more impactful, a wiser decision to have one entity that oversees transit right across our region?

Mr. John Di Nino: It might make sense if there was a definitive plan and the stakeholders like ATU were at the table and had some constructive dialogue on how that was going to unfold and unroll. We have no information from Metrolinx or this government on what that plan looks like.

So if you'd like to invite us to sit at the table, we would be more than happy to have some constructive dialogue and maybe figure out a plan on how that would look in the future.

Ms. Donna Skelly: But you would agree it is a better system?

Mr. John Di Nino: Not at this time.

Ms. Donna Skelly: One person, you don't think it would be more—

Mr. John Di Nino: I don't know enough about what the proposals are from your government on how that's going to look just yet.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. I just want to ask one other question before I hand it over to my colleagues. You're referring to a reference to privatizing transit in Bill 57. Where are we saying that we're privatizing transit?

Mr. John Di Nino: Your Minister of Transportation made an announcement at the economic statement last week that said the Mimico GO station was going to be privatized and built for free as long as the developer got the land and the air space above. Your own Transportation Minister Yurek made that announcement. That is privatization. You are giving away Toronto's land. You're giving away what the citizens of this city own to a private contractor for profit. That is privatization.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Okay. I'm going to hand it over.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: So I'm in Peterborough, and for us to get down to Toronto—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Dave Smith: —we're taking Peterborough Transit, which is represented by your union. It's about \$2.50 to hop on the bus in Peterborough. Then we pick up the Greyhound to get down to Cobourg, where we hop on the GO train to get into Toronto at Union Station. Then we hop onto the TTC to go where we want to go to here. I'm not sure that it's a bad idea to put multiple portions of that trip together as one. Looking at moving people from Peterborough into Toronto to do things that we do in Toronto, having a simplified system, makes a lot of sense to me in my riding.

You talked about privatization, though, and I'd like to point out that the Manulife Centre has a subway stop in it, and it works very, very well. Why aren't you objecting to

Manulife having a subway stop right there to move people into that building?

Mr. John Di Nino: Because—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. We'll have to move on. I apologize, but we're at our time limit, so thank you very much.

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'd now like to call up the Canadian Cancer Society. Again, if you could just state your names for the record, and please delve right into your presentation. Thank you.

Ms. Sarah Cruickshank: Good morning, Chair and committee members. On behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee during hearings on Bill 57. My name is Sarah Cruickshank, senior coordinator of public issues, and I'm accompanied by Rob Cunningham, lawyer and senior policy analyst.

The focus for our testimony is schedules 5 and 27 of the bill, as outlined in the joint written brief from the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco and the Canadian Cancer Society, a brief that has been distributed to you. Schedules 5 and 27 of Bill 57 would amend the City of Toronto Act and the Municipal Act and extend municipal authority to adopt bylaws from restricting smoking and vaping of tobacco to smoking and vaping of tobacco and cannabis. We support these provisions and thank the government for bringing these provisions forward.

In Ontario, there is a long history of municipalities adopting smoking bylaws to respond to community needs with measures going further than what is established by provincial legislation. This principle should apply regarding municipal ability to adopt bylaws to restrict smoking and vaping of cannabis, just as has been the case for smoking of tobacco. While supporting these provisions in schedules 5 and 27 of the bill, we also recommend that these provisions be improved through an amendment. I will now turn things over to Rob.

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Thank you, Sarah. As outlined in our written brief, we recommend that a straightforward amendment be made to schedules 5 and 27, an amendment that would advance the government's intended objectives and provide clarity for municipal authority regarding smoking and vaping bylaws.

We recommend that the provisions in schedules 5 and 27 be amended to apply to smoking and vaping of anything, not just, at the moment, "tobacco and cannabis," and also that the provisions apply to "tobacco, cannabis or other substances," so they would just apply to smoking of anything.

Such an amendment would have a number of benefits. First, the recommended amendment would facilitate enforcement. If smoking of anything was banned, there would be no need to prove that what was being smoked was tobacco or cannabis; it would be sufficient to demonstrate that there was smoking, regardless of the substance being smoked.

Similarly, for e-cigarettes, there would not be any need to prove what the substance is that is being consumed in an e-cigarette. Many cannabis users will use e-cigarettes to consume cannabis, and it's normally impossible to determine what substance is inside the e-cigarette by simple observation without testing it. An inspector looking at an e-cigarette would not know what the substance is inside. Our recommended amendment would facilitate effective enforcement and compliance.

Moreover, bylaws restricting use of e-cigarettes should apply to all e-cigarettes, not just those with tobacco or cannabis. Provincially, under legislation proclaimed by the new government on October 17, when cannabis legislation came into force and cannabis was legalized, the use of all e-cigarettes is banned wherever smoking is banned, regardless of the substance in the e-cigarette. We recommend that the same approach should be available to municipalities with respect to their own municipal bylaws. There should not be a different approach.

Further, the current wording in the bill, in the schedules, refers to e-cigarettes containing tobacco or cannabis when, in fact, very few e-cigarettes actually contain tobacco; they much more likely contain nicotine. It can also be noted that illegal drugs can be consumed through e-cigarettes, and again, it's impossible to know just by a visual look whether it's an illegal substance or a legal substance.

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The second benefit of the recommended amendment would be the elimination of any lack of certainty that municipalities could adopt smoking bylaws regarding herbal non-tobacco water pipe—hookah—smoking. A growing number of municipalities have adopted bylaws to prohibit all water pipe hookah smoking in indoor public places—less so outdoors, but certainly indoors—including non-tobacco water pipe smoking. These municipalities include Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor, Peel region, Orillia, Barrie and Peterborough. Several of these municipal bylaws, including in Toronto and Peel region, were the subject of legal challenges on the basis that there was not municipal authority to even adopt such bylaws.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Rob Cunningham: While these legal challenges failed, the recommended amendment would provide clarity for all concerned.

In closing, we urge all committee members to support our recommended amendment to Bill 57. It advances the government's objectives. It would provide clarity for municipalities and would facilitate enforcement and compliance.

We look forward to your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start with the government side: Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning. Thank you for coming in. I'm from Hamilton. One of the things I was reading this morning—it's interesting the number of municipalities that are now considering opting out and not allowing cannabis to be sold in their communities. Of course, they have every right to or not to, but one of my concerns is what that will do with the black market and

whether or not we will see less control in terms of access for children. I'm just wondering, in your experience, if you've had any opportunity or any discussions at all about what could possibly happen in communities that choose not to allow cannabis to be sold in their municipality, and how we could, in those cases, prevent it from getting in the hands of children.

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Of course, that's a different issue than in the bill and in our submissions. I think it may depend on the size of the municipality. Hamilton is quite a large municipality. So there would be different questions with respect to illicit sales that would arise in Hamilton than a very small community that may be 2,000 people or a bedroom community closer to an urban centre, where it's not that far away in terms of the legal access or the online access.

We don't have a position with respect to the legalization of cannabis, but there are certain measures that we can learn from the tobacco experience that can reduce sales and prevent youth use, one of which is to control where it can be used. Certainly, with respect to e-cigarettes, there is growth in terms of the use by youth. This would allow municipalities to respond to community needs.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Through the Chair, when we were consulting and considering how we would put forward our legislation—which, of course, we were forced to do, realizing that this was a federal initiative—I spoke with a number of police officers who really did want it to be treated similar to tobacco, because they said that the frustrations and the limitations of trying to police something that wasn't treated in the same manner would make it very difficult. We did speak with a number of police officers who felt that what we put forward was fairly wholesome and fulsome, and would be something that they could work with, but you don't seem to think that it's gone far enough.

Mr. Rob Cunningham: In terms of where you can use it, the approach has been in provincial legislation to allow municipalities to have the same approach. It used to be cigarettes of anything and also smoking of anything, using the provincial example. But in general terms in respect to cannabis, and various aspects in terms of where it can be sold, sales to minors, taxation, where it can be used, and advertising, the tobacco experience has informed a lot of the legislation in Ontario and federally.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: I just had a quick question. Thank you very much for this, for a very reasonable approach to this, and for sharing this. Two questions: One, if you could just clarify "other substances," and how you might flesh that out. Secondly, you talk about holding other substances; I know there were some issues, for example, with vaping in my community. I've spoken to the community about a number of people who have transitioned away from smoking, and being able to hold the device and be shown how to responsibly use it by the store operator, saying, "Here's how you responsibly use this," and helping people transition out of smoking through vaping and the positive effect that that has had on their lives.

Mr. Rob Cunningham: E-cigarettes are less harmful than traditional cigarettes, and they are available for people who are unable to quit. Ontario legislation has been amended to allow the testing in vape stores, so that issue is complete.

Other substances: Sometimes there's no nicotine; it's just flavours—maybe it's a starter thing. There could be hash oil. There are other illegal drugs that I'm not totally familiar with, but I guess it's really increasing. That's of concern; you can't tell what's in it. But if you have to prove that it's cannabis, how can you prove that? It's just simple: You can't just use e-cigarettes. You should still be able to use them as a substitute, though.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We're now going to turn to the opposite side for questions: Mr. Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm just asking these questions out of clarification. Thank you so much for coming and for the deputation.

When you're talking about smoking of tobacco, are you also talking about smoking and vaping?

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Yes. The amendments apply to both smoking and vaping.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Then should the amendment be both smoking and vaping?

Mr. Rob Cunningham: There are different provisions in the schedule. There's one part that applies to smoking, and there's another reference to vaping.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. The concern with vaping—you mentioned that sometimes there's hash oil or some other drugs that could be in there. What is the concern about doing that in public?

Mr. Rob Cunningham: The basic principle that has been applied across Canada is, wherever smoking is banned, you shouldn't be able to use e-cigarettes, in part because there are emissions that come from e-cigarettes and in part that you don't want to undermine the smoke-free places—the benefit that has to encourage cessation. It could be a youth soccer field. It could be near a baseball field or a local park. There's a whole series of areas that municipalities may choose. If they want to choose that you shouldn't have e-cigarettes in these places, they can make that choice.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Is it also the concern that vaping is a gateway to smoking or to the use of other drugs?

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Certainly, in Ontario and across Canada, e-cigarettes, among teenagers, has really increased. Among grades 10 to 12 students in Ontario, in the most recent school year, 2016-17, it was 46% higher than a survey two years earlier. That was even before some recent actions by the companies that have increased concern. So yes, we don't want kids using these. We don't want them to get addicted. We don't want them to then, for example, go on to smoking.

Mr. Chris Glover: When you talk about actions by the companies, are you talking about marketing to youth?

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Yes. There's a new company that has launched. That's Juul. They have various

promotions. They're under investigation in the United States by the FDA for marketing to youth in terms of the various promotions they have in terms of social media and so on. This is one mechanism that gives municipalities the opportunity to respond best within their communities.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. The nicotine that you get from an e-cigarette is addictive as well, right?

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Nicotine is addictive. Yes, it can lead to addiction.

Mr. Chris Glover: Right. The other substances that you were talking about—are some of them also addictive?

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Cannabis can lead to dependence, and the other substances, potentially, can lead to dependence as well.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. If you're looking at it from a marketing perspective: They market to youth, they get the kids hooked on nicotine or some other substance and then they have their market secured. Is that the business model that they're looking at?

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Certainly for tobacco. Over the years, almost all new users have been underage—teenagers. Very few people start as adults. The nicotine is so addictive—as addictive as heroin or cocaine. That's right; the tobacco industry, which also sells e-cigarettes, can have these customers for life.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think we're good.

We want to thank you very much for your testimony here. We appreciate these reasoned amendments. Hopefully, the government will be amenable to your amendments. Thank you.

Mr. Rob Cunningham: Thanks very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your testimony.

We'll wrap up this morning session. We'll resume again today at 2 o'clock. I look forward to seeing you all then.

The committee recessed from 0959 to 1400.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to this afternoon. We're meeting to resume our public hearings on Bill 57, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. Each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by up to 10 minutes of questioning from the committee, divided equally amongst the recognized parties.

Just as a reminder, the deadline to send written submissions to the Clerk of the Committee is 6 p.m. today.

We also have translation devices, each of us, in front of us, which can be plugged into the right-hand side of your unit if you need it.

Are there any questions before we begin? Okay, we'll get started.

OFFICE OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE
SERVICES COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO
COMMISSAIRE AUX SERVICES
EN FRANÇAIS

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll call Mr. Boileau. If you could please introduce yourself and the organization you're with, and then please proceed.

Mr. François Boileau: Mr. Chair and members of the committee, my name is François Boileau. I'm the Ontario French Language Services Commissioner. I'm with Joseph Morin, our legal counsel. Thank you very much for inviting me to appear before you to present my perspective on Bill 57 and, more specifically, on schedule 20, which amends the French Language Services Act.

As you know, the bill abolishes the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner. It also creates a new position, a deputy ombudsman or, as the government announced last Friday, a French language services commissioner under the authority and direction of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

La Loi sur les services en français a été modifiée unanimement en 2007 pour créer le poste de commissaire. Auparavant, les plaintes relevaient de l'Office des affaires francophones. En 2014, encore unanimement, le poste de commissaire devient un officier indépendant de l'Assemblée législative.

The rest will be in English.

Since my appointment in 2007, and more effectively since 2014, I have consistently acted as an agent of change. My mandate and independence have allowed me to act upstream in the policy development continuum. My goal has been the same as prescribed in the act, which is to enhance the quality of French-language services in order to sustain the development of vibrant French-speaking communities in Ontario.

Of course, like the Ombudsman's office, we do receive and resolve complaints from the public, but this is only a portion of our functions. For an effective interpretation of the act, the commissioner must consult the community, promote and protect, and advise government. It is not in the Ombudsman's statute, priorities or even in his DNA to fulfill this mandate, as the Ombudsman's office is one of last resort. We are not. It is our ability to voice our opinion and offer advice in a cost-effective manner that distinguishes us from the role of the Ombudsman. The options we propose are always pragmatic, never dogmatic, and take into account the needs of the French-speaking population.

To give you a better sense of my role as an adviser, in the last three years alone, I had 13 meetings with ministers, 21 meetings with deputy ministers and 74 meetings with other high-ranking public servants in different ministries: in total, 108 high-level meetings on strengthening French-language services. I was able to impart useful advice to assist these decision-makers in designing effective public policy. The Ombudsman of Ontario, or his deputy or commissioner, will not be able to continue this line of work. To believe

otherwise is a serious misunderstanding of the role of the French Language Services Commissioner.

We also champion co-operation between officers. For instance, I asked the assistance of the advocate for children and youth for my investigation into Centre Jules-Léger, a school for deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind and deafblind students. Without his support, we surely would not have been able to gain the trust of students so adequately. Through consultation, we know the communities and we understand systemic problems that plague vast numbers of vulnerable francophones in areas such as health, education, mental health, children, social services, immigration and access to justice.

As commissioner, since 2014 I have taken part in at least 233 community meetings. The Ombudsman of Ontario, or his deputy or commissioner, cannot carry out this function and activity.

If you pass this bill without removing schedule 20, the Franco-Ontarian community will lose a strong, independent voice that advocates for the rights protected under the French Language Services Act. Without an independent commissioner that can launch proactive investigations and studies, the community may suffer from further interference, challenges and encroachments of their rights.

After 11 years, I strongly believe more work is required to advise government on their obligation under the act, work that only an independent commissioner can accomplish. Eliminating the independent Office of the French Language Services Commissioner will maybe save taxpayers less than \$300,000, but what we are losing, what Franco-Ontarians and the general public are losing—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. François Boileau: —is the voice of an expert and cost-effective adviser.

Je vous remercie. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Merci. Thank you. We'll start with the opposition for five minutes of questioning. Monsieur Bourgouin.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci, monsieur le Commissaire. Ma question serait peut-être en deux parties.

J'aimerais vous entendre, puisqu'il semble—comme vous le savez, notre position du NPD est claire. Nous autres, on veut garder le commissaire puis aussi notre université. Mais il semble y avoir une opinion qui diffère, à dire que, s'ils sont pareils ou non, le commissaire et l'ombudsman, le transfert qu'il va y avoir, que ça va être la même chose. J'aimerais avoir vos commentaires là-dessus. C'est quoi la différence entre les deux, ce que le gouvernement propose puis l'indépendance du commissaire?

M. François Boileau: D'abord, je vous remercie de votre question. Je vous répondrai en deux temps.

Il y a l'aspect symbolique, d'une part. Donc, au niveau du symbole, on perd une institution indépendante, une institution francophone, qui a plain-pied au sein de l'Assemblée législative. Ça, c'était un gain majeur en 2014. Donc, on perd ça. On perd cette capacité d'avoir une voix influente au sein de l'Assemblée législative de façon autonome.

Deuxième point, c'est au niveau pratico-pratique. Au cours des 11 dernières années, j'ai eu l'occasion de déposer pas moins de 16 rapports spéciaux, rapports d'enquête et études, que ce soit dans le domaine de l'éducation, dans le domaine de l'accès à la justice, dans le domaine de l'immigration, dans le domaine des communications et directives. Tous ces rapports-là, 16 en 11 ans, comment est-ce que l'ombudsman va pouvoir réussir à faire ça? Vraiment, je ne le sais pas. Ce sera difficile pour l'ombudsman de pouvoir continuer dans cette ligne-là, parce qu'il est un bureau de dernier recours; nous ne sommes pas un bureau de dernier recours. Nous avons un rôle d'être proactif; il n'a pas un rôle d'être proactif. C'est aussi simple que ça. L'ombudsman ne pourra pas être un « advocate ». Il ne pourra pas être un agent de changement comme, nous, on doit l'être parce que justement ça fait partie de notre ADN comme Commissariat aux services en français.

M. Guy Bourgouin: D'abord, ce qu'on entend la ministre nous dire, que c'est pareil et que les Franco-Ontariens ne perdront pas des services, n'est pas exactement vrai.

M. François Boileau: Ça ne peut pas être exact puisque nous avons, en ce moment, une institution indépendante qui relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. Donc, de prétendre que nous n'allons pas perdre au change et même que nous allons progresser, je ne vois pas en quoi.

Si c'est pour des raisons financières ou budgétaires, j'aimerais bien qu'on explique encore comment est-ce qu'on va pouvoir sauver tant de sous que ça alors que nous sommes prêts, comme officier de l'Assemblée législative, à recevoir des directives très claires de la Commission de régulation interne—the Board of Internal Economy—de façon à ce que nous puissions être plus efficaces mais sans enlever l'indépendance rattachée au poste de commissaire.

M. Guy Bourgouin: J'aimerais aussi vous entendre sur—je sais que vous en avez parlé un petit peu—l'impact que les francophones vont voir avec l'abolissement du commissaire indépendant et comment les communautés francophones vont ressentir ces coupures-là.

M. François Boileau: En fait, je vous répondrai par un autre exemple. En 2012, personne ne parlait d'une université de l'Ontario français. Mais nous avons déposé un rapport proactif sur la question, un rapport qui s'intitulait « Pas d'avenir sans accès » qui a établi très clairement au niveau des faits que les francophones dans les régions du sud-ouest/centre-sud-ouest, qui pourtant forment la population francophone qui est la plus en croissance en Ontario—très diversifiée—n'avaient qu'entre 0 % et 3 % de l'équivalent des programmes postsecondaires en français. C'est une population qui, en plus, va le plus massivement en éducation postsecondaire, ce qui est en soi un peu ironique parce que c'est la population, donc, qui ne peut pas être formée en matière d'éducation postsecondaire en français dans le centre-sud-ouest.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

M. François Boileau: Donc, on avait établi un rapport qui disait non pas que nous devrions avoir une université

de langue française mais qu'on devrait avoir une discussion là-dessus et certainement un accroissement des programmes. Nous sommes restés factuels. Nous sommes demeurés objectifs par rapport à cette analyse-là.

À la suite de ça, la communauté francophone a entamé un dialogue avec le gouvernement. Il y a eu deux autres rapports qui ont été soumis par la suite qui ont dit la même chose que, nous, on avait écrit. Donc, le discours public a été changé et modifié.

Cette capacité d'être un agent de changement va être perdue si le poste de commissaire est aboli et si l'institution qui est le Commissariat aux services en français est également abolie.

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M. Guy Bourgouin: Juste pour terminer, si vous dites ça en un mot : c'est pareil ou pas pareil, ce que la ministre propose?

M. François Boileau: En deux mots c'est « pas pareil. »

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you, Mr. Boileau. We'll return to the government side for questioning. I'll start with Mr. Roberts.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Merci beaucoup d'être ici, monsieur Boileau, et monsieur Morin aussi. C'est un plaisir de vous avoir ici.

Moi, je suis demi-francophone. Mon côté maternel est franco-ontarien.

Ma circonscription a une population d'environ 18 % de Franco-Ontariens. Donc, ceci est une chose qui est importante pour moi, d'assurer qu'on a une bonne balance entre les buts de notre gouvernement et aussi le but d'assurer que nous protégeons la population des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes.

Une des choses que je veux vous demander—vous parlez beaucoup que vous avez peur que vous allez perdre les pouvoirs que vous avez déjà pour assurer que vous pouvez promouvoir la communauté franco-ontarienne et la défendre. Mais d'où est-ce que vous avez eu cette idée, que c'est quelque chose que vous allez perdre? Est-ce qu'il y avait quelqu'un qui a dit à vous qu'avec ce nouveau système, vous allez perdre ce pouvoir pour avoir la chance de promouvoir la communauté et la défendre?

M. François Boileau: Je vous remercie de votre question. De fait, je l'ai pris de moi-même puisque je suis avocat de formation et je sais lire un projet de loi.

Lorsqu'on a une institution qui est indépendante et qui, du jour au lendemain, ne le sera plus, elle va disparaître, bien forcément. Ça fait en sorte que le ou la commissaire, ou l'ombudsman adjoint—mais je pense que le gouvernement veut aller dans une direction de « commissaire »—cette personne-là va devoir maintenant discuter de ses priorités avec l'ombudsman de l'Ontario. En discutant de ses priorités de pouvoir déterminer son budget, de pouvoir déterminer les ressources humaines dont il ou elle aura besoin, de pouvoir déterminer sa propre base de données, de pouvoir déterminer ses besoins en termes d'immobilisation, etc.—tout ça, il va falloir qu'il en discute avec l'ombudsman, Paul Dubé.

Maintenant, Paul Dubé est un chic type, un super ombudsman qui fait un très, très bon travail. Mais il ne demeure pas moins que dans les décennies à venir, Paul Dubé va changer éventuellement; il va y avoir quelqu'un d'autre, et ce quelqu'un d'autre pourrait être un ombudsman qui n'a peut-être pas la même oreille ou la même écoute ou la même appréciation des besoins de la communauté francophone. Lorsqu'il sera question de déterminer les priorités—parce que je peux vous assurer, y avoir été, depuis les quatre dernières, devant la Commission de régie interne, the Board of Internal Economy, c'est un exercice qui est quand même très sérieux. On présente nos objectifs, on présente ce dont on a besoin, et c'est la Commission de régie interne qui détermine nos budgets. Là, ce sera l'ombudsman qui devra faire ça pour le commissaire aux services en français et pour sa petite équipe qui suivra.

Alors, pour répondre à la question, ça ne peut pas être pareil. C'est donc un recul, parce qu'en ce moment on a quelque chose qui va très bien, qui suscite beaucoup d'intérêt et qui suscite—je pense que vous le voyez aussi, c'est quelque chose qui a été quand même assez important pour la communauté francophone. On le voit au cours des dernières semaines. Moi-même, j'en suis un peu estomaqué, parce qu'on est quand même des fonctionnaires; on ne sauve pas des vies non plus. Mais on a un impact très certain au niveau des communautés francophones à un niveau individuel, donc au niveau des enquêtes, et on a un impact aussi à un niveau systémique, et je pense que cet apport-là risque d'être perdu.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Je vous remercie pour ça. Une des choses que tu as dit c'est que—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

M. Jeremy Roberts: —tu as un petit peu peur que tu ne vas pas avoir les mêmes ressources avec l'ombudsman. J'ai eu la chance aujourd'hui de lire votre site Web. J'ai lu là-bas qu'il y avait une section qui disait qu'on « recevait plusieurs plaintes par jour. Cette situation entraînait inévitablement des retards dans le traitement des plaintes. Le commissariat a donc mis en place certaines mesures pour corriger la situation, c'est-à-dire éliminer tous les retards et en prévenir d'autres lors du traitement des plaintes. »

Pour moi, je pense que c'est une opportunité fantastique pour avoir la chance d'utiliser les ressources de l'ombudsman. Est-ce que tu ne penses pas que cela, ce serait une bonne opportunité pour assurer que votre position a plus de ressources pour aider plus de plaintes?

M. François Boileau: Je vais vous répondre en deux temps. Lorsque j'avais écrit ça, dans un rapport ou dans le site Web, c'est parce que—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I apologize. We're going to have to cut you off. We have to move along. My apologies. I'd like to thank you, Mr. Boileau, for appearing here today. In the interests of time we have to keep moving, so thank you very much.

CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS AND EXPORTERS

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'd like to now call the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. If you could just state your name for the record, we'll get right into the presentation. Thank you.

Mr. Alex Greco: Great. Thank you. Alex Greco, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters.

Good afternoon, and thank you for inviting me again to appear before the committee. I'm here to speak to you about Bill 57, the Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018.

Manufacturing directly accounts for nearly 12% of gross domestic product, 80% of exports and nearly 800,000 direct jobs. Factoring in these economic spinoffs, manufacturers drive nearly 30% of all economic activity, 25% of all jobs and one third of all government revenues.

However, Ontario's manufacturing sector is facing intense global competition and stagnant output and exports. These struggles can be traced to one key factor: declining investment. Simply put, without investment, businesses cannot compete with other jurisdictions and the economy cannot grow.

This stands in stark contrast to our international competitors. Over the past five years, Ontario and Canada as a whole have seen the slowest growth in business capital spending in the entire G7, except for Italy. Investment growth is two and a half times slower than the OECD average, and three times slower than that in the US.

With that context in mind, CME has been focused on growing on the critical needs of the manufacturing sector, with the aim to bring sustained growth and prosperity to manufacturing. I will have more to say on this later in my remarks.

However, I want to state up front that we support this piece of legislation. Bill 57 is an important step for the government to take in order to help lay the foundation to reverse recent stagnation and once again have the manufacturing sector become a leader in economic growth and prosperity for the province.

So why do we support this legislation? First, we appreciate the government's move to prevent the elimination of the small business tax rate. All manufacturers, particularly small and medium manufacturers, need to have more cash available to invest in their operations. This is critical, because after-tax profits and business investment are linked together. And with more opportunities to invest, companies can reinvest in their people, products and processes.

Second, we support delaying the implementation date of the Pay Transparency Act. To be clear, CME believes that diversity in the workforce is something that can make an organization stronger and more competitive. However, we do not support legislation that would unnecessarily increase costs and the regulatory burden on employers. That said, CME believes that the Pay Transparency Act imposes obligations on employers that negatively impact their ability to compete in other jurisdictions.

As consultations on the act commence, the government should consider repealing this legislation, as the requirements necessitated by the act are not necessary to achieve the objective of ensuring that an employer is not engaging in compensation-based discrimination.

Finally, we welcome amendments to the Pension Benefits Act, as they help reduce costly compliance and administrative burdens on plan sponsors, and streamline pension beneficiary designations.

But where do we go from here? As we look towards the next budget, additional legislation must be initiated to help enable a sustainable business climate that is world-class and sets manufacturers up for success. Ontario has a choice: We can do nothing and watch manufacturing continue to stagnate, while investment and production continue to go to other jurisdictions, or we can act decisively to once again make Ontario a preferred location for manufacturing.

Based on member consultation, there are three steps that can be taken. First, we must further reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario. We were pleased to see, in the fall economic statement, a commitment by the government to reduce the regulatory burden by 25% by 2022, and to review industrial electricity pricing.

However, to ensure effective action, the government must look at introducing a regulatory bill of rights that ensures that all regulations moving forward balance the needs of regulators with business and implementing an industrial electricity rate that is competitive with US jurisdictions.

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Second, we must improve access to skilled labour. According to the results of our 2018 management issues survey, 77% of respondents stated they faced immediate labour and skills shortages and, five years from now, close to 80% anticipate such shortages. Initiatives ranging from funding for work-integrated learning programs and working with the federal government to make the Ontario-Canada Job Grant permanent is crucial to ensure access is improved.

Third, the government must support the need for investment, technology adoption, and commercialization and scale-up. Ontario must identify and target opportunities for growth that will reshape the manufacturing landscape in the province and invest resources in their development. Creating manufacturing hubs and demonstration centres that connect technology companies with manufacturers, funding globally competitive direct investment support programs, and implementing a patent box system to reward commercialization and production of goods and advanced technologies can help accomplish this objective.

I thank you for the opportunity to present today. I look forward to taking your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you, Mr. Greco. We'll start with questioning for five minutes from the government side. Mr. Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: Good afternoon, and thanks, Mr. Greco, for joining us today. I appreciate you being here. You spoke on a couple of things. I think doing nothing is not an option, and this government has shown that we're

not going to be willing to stand by and lose more manufacturing jobs, like in my community in Northumberland–Peterborough South. I think Bill 47, when you talk about access to skilled labour, the reduction of ratios to 1 to 1—we were pleased to see support from unions straight through, and most of the people who did depositions on Bill 47. In fact, I think all but one supported those. So it was good to see that.

Finally, you touched on investing back. I know that investing back in the workers—for every dollar they do south of the border where we're hemorrhaging these jobs, statistics show that we in Ontario invest 39 cents. I know that when you talk about in the people as well—and in advanced manufacturing in Quebec, we've seen that investment go up; in Ontario, it has tanked.

Talk to me a bit about the importance of this bill to free up that capital, to reinvest back in workers and back in technologies that are going to continue to help businesses grow and attract investments here in Ontario.

Mr. Alex Greco: I think the reason why having that capital investment is so important is because companies need to have the ability to train workers and to be able to balance that between training and formal education as well. When we've consulted with our members, they're having the challenge of being able to train their employees to a point where they're able to position them where they're ready for the workforce when they're ready to get into manufacturing.

I think investment that goes into programs like work-integrated learning programs like I mentioned, which we piloted at CME a few years ago with Siemens, which is one of our members, allows us to balance between on-the-job training and formal education, so they're hitting the ground running when they're able to start working in the manufacturing sector.

Secondly, it's also being able to get them to develop the skills that they need in general, because whether you're a tool and die manufacturer or you're a welder, you need to have those skills to be able to operate the machinery. If we're going to be able to build for the future and have more graduates who have those skills and we're investing in technology, then you need to be able to invest in those workers—not only that; companies as a whole can be able to scale up. We have a lot of large companies and we have a lot of small companies, but you need to be able to scale them up in order for them to be successful.

Mr. David Piccini: And as to scaling up, obviously the ratio changes—I made an announcement at OCAD the other day about a \$27-million investment into the Rosalie Sharp Pavilion. There's some remarkable work they're doing there. At Trent, my colleague Dave Smith and I were there to see the investments we're doing there. I think colleges play a key role in that.

But talk a bit more about elementary education as well, and if you could elaborate a bit on that.

Mr. Alex Greco: I think one of the things—and this will be touched on tomorrow when we release our manufacturing strategy—is that education and training in terms of math, sciences and technology is incredibly

important, and how we are able to look in the classroom and be able to improve how those subjects are taught in school, because what we've heard from our members too—and we've had parents of ours who have attended parent-teacher conferences or even STEM nights, for example. It's really about: How do you formalize the curriculum to a point where they're getting the skills that they need but also the tutoring and assistance available, right?

Myself, I'm a political science graduate, but we need more students to have careers in science and math so that they could be able to operate advanced technology moving forward. I think the education consultation that the government is putting forward has to really focus on that if we're going to develop the skills for future generations.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: You touched on the US right now, and that we are investing three times slower than what the US is on manufacturing.

Mr. Alex Greco: Yes.

Mr. Dave Smith: I come from the Peterborough–Kawartha riding. We've lost General Electric, OMC, Kendall, Surgikos, Johnson and Johnson—all manufacturers, over the last number of years.

We have a manufacturer just outside of town that has some CNC equipment that is about six years old. He said that with technology changes, that machinery is out of date. Moore's Law says that processors will double in speed every 18 months. So the change to the CCA, allowing capital investment to be amortized over a much faster period of time: Do you think that's going to have a positive effect on the technology side of manufacturing?

Mr. Alex Greco: I think it's a good start. I think it was something that we had pushed for at CME, with the federal government. We're encouraged that the Ontario government is looking to match those measures.

But I think that we have to look at an overall structure of the tax system as a whole. Putting corporate taxes aside, it's to have outcomes-based taxation. If you have companies that are willing to invest here, you reward them with R&D tax incentives, tax credits and other investment supports that they need in order to be able to invest.

I think what we have is a good start, but we have to take that next step, to have that comprehensive review so we reverse the investment trends, particularly of foreign direct investment between Canada and the United States, because if we don't fix that issue, then some of the other aspects that I mentioned will not matter at all.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We're now going to move to the opposition side. You have five minutes.

Mr. Ian Arthur: No questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): No questions? Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Alex Greco: Thank you.

MS. ELLEN SCHWARTZEL

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Now I'd like to call up our next witness, Ellen Schwartzel. Welcome. If you could just state your name and your organization, and please proceed right into your presentation.

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: Certainly. Thanks very much, Mr. Chair and committee members, for the chance to speak. My name is Ellen Schwartzel. I'm now retired, but I served under three environmental commissioners, back to 1995, so 24 years of experience. I testified at the Walkerton inquiry. I was deputy environmental commissioner from 2013 to the summer of 2018.

I want to share my own observations on how the Environmental Commissioner adds value, both to MPPs and for your constituents—real service that's about to be lost, services that will not be provided under the Auditor General.

Under Bill 57, we are losing our stand-alone environmental voice at Queen's Park. Right now, the Environmental Commissioner can talk directly to the Legislature, the MPPs and the media. When the commissioner releases an annual report, he or she can explain the background through talks, tours, webinars and media interviews.

The commissioner also has discretion to issue special reports. The ECO issued eight special reports in the last decade. Those reports can provide valuable early warnings.

All of those services will end under Bill 57. A mere employee of the Auditor General will not have discretion to speak directly to MPPs or the public, or to issue special reports. In effect, we are disabling fire alarms. We know what can happen when we disable fire alarms. It's a bad idea.

Ontarians are also losing the right to trigger reviews, under the Environmental Bill of Rights, for stronger laws and policies for the environment. At first blush, some might think, "Oh, that right is still there," but it's there in name only. People can still ask, but the ministries will no longer be held to account by the commissioner for how they respond to review requests.

The commissioner's regular public reporting—and, yes, badgering—was vital to give this tool legitimacy. Make no mistake: The Ontario public used this right to very positive effect. To name just a few examples, the citizens' tool played a big role in the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine, which was a Conservative decision; the updated Provincial Parks Act of 2006; stronger rehab rules for sand and gravel pits; and, recently, some help for rural communities struggling with unwanted dumps of construction fill.

We are losing, as well, the site-specific focus, especially in rural and northern Ontario, where environmental problems often show up as local hot spots and can fester for years unresolved: noise and dust from gravel pits, fly ash from aging cement plants, landfill seeps and groundwater problems.

As MPPs, you struggle to deal with those in your ridings. You know how hard it is to get ministry staff to

come to speak to groups of your unhappy citizens. But as MPPs, you can get the Environmental Commissioner to come and be an active listener. Indeed, several MPPs, three of them now cabinet ministers, had the commissioner in their ridings over the last two years, and you can see my written submission for details.

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The commissioner can explain the technical and regulatory issues and the tools available to your constituents. That honest broker presence of the commissioner can help advance issues that have stalled, and that's worth gold. But community visits and honest broker listening are not tools of Auditors General.

Last, but very importantly, we are losing the independence of our expert voices at Queen's Park. Bill 57 would not just silence three watchdogs; it would undercut the independence of every legislative officer, from the Auditor General to the Clerk to the Ombudsman to the Integrity Commissioner, by threatening them with suspension at any moment. This is most alarming.

The job of legislative officers is hard by definition: to tell uncomfortable truths to government. Who will tell uncomfortable truths in the face of constant fear of losing their jobs? They could be suspended on the mere opinion of the government, and with no recourse or compensation, as Bill 57 makes clear.

The job of MPPs is also hard. You have complex files and a punishing pace. You rely on the services of independent expert voices to give you unvarnished perspectives. Ontario's legislative officers are your strongest support in that work. What's being attacked here also is your ability to inform your work and serve your constituents with the best decisions.

In my submission package, I have included thumbnail sketches of some of the ECO's work over the years. I encourage you to read them, and I welcome your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you, Ms. Schwartzel. We'll start with the opposition side for questions. Mr. Arthur?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much for your presentation. Would you comment—do you know how the Environmental Commissioner and their office learned of the changes that were coming to their office? Would you describe if you know of any consultation that was done or when it was done?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: I only know this from listening to the CBC Radio Noon. As a listener in my kitchen, I understand there was no consultation and there was no advance warning—none.

Mr. Ian Arthur: You touched briefly on the required reports that the Environmental Commissioner had to deliver each year, the special reports and the three mandatory ones. Do you think that there is sufficient language to require a similar position under the Auditor General, to provide the same level of reporting?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: No, I don't. No. I think it could very well be that environmental matters would be folded into the Auditor General's report and be lost, essentially. I

think there's great value in having someone at Queen's Park, free and independent, to be able to speak directly for the environment. We have a very big resource economy here in Ontario, we have multiple billion-dollar industries that are resource-dependent, and our long-term sustainability, which the previous speaker spoke about, depends as much as anything on us maintaining that natural resource capital for the long term, for the next generation, and, as well, to show the world that we have got a reliable, trustworthy, credible oversight on the environment. That's what will bring investment in the long term. I'm convinced of it.

Mr. Ian Arthur: This move has been described as one to save money. Are you aware of any actual numbers or savings that have been attached to this move so far?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: Again, I'm retired, but I do know that the annual budget of the office is about \$4 million. That comes to about 30 cents per person per year. If these staff are folded into the Auditor General's office, as apparently they will be, according to media reports, then there are no savings in any case. So this is really, as far as I'm concerned, a case of shooting the messenger.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: To be very direct, could you describe why you think this is being done by the Ford government?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: As I said in my previous point, I think that it's a government that really was new to governing and perhaps didn't realize what the roles are of legislative watchdogs, and was a little surprised by the fact that they have the freedom to speak at Queen's Park directly, and they thought, "Well, we don't like this." I can only surmise.

This is a very sophisticated, 21st-century economy, and we expect sophisticated environmental governance to go along with it. And that's what we've had for 25 years and that's just being pulled apart, and I'm being given five minutes to speak to it as a retiree.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: There's not a whole lot of time here. In terms of the reports that are expected from the new role in the Auditor General's office—also, would you comment on the time frame of the new environmental plan that only requires to be reported on once every four years—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Ian Arthur: —is my understanding. Just again—*Interjection.*

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Yes?

Mr. Dave Smith: We're discussing Bill 57. The questions need to be about Bill 57. That's what we're discussing.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We are discussing Bill 57. Mr. Arthur?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you again. Given how quickly climate change and environmental issues are accelerating, do you feel that the reporting requirements in Bill 57 are sufficient?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: I don't believe so. I think, as well, we need to keep in mind that a lot of what the

Environmental Commissioner has been doing for 25 years are very bread-and-butter issues. They are local clean water; groundwater contamination for people's private wells in rural Ontario; people living near really noisy sand and gravel pits. That's the kind of service that we have been helping people with day in and day out for decades. That's what is about to be lost. I don't think that especially rural MPPs are doing themselves or their constituents any favour—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We're just going to go to the government side. We have five minutes. Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Ms. Schwartzel, thank you very much. I've been listening intently to your presentation. Clearly you are passionate about this subject and you have a tremendous amount of experience working in the Office of the Environmental Commissioner.

A question for you: Would you agree that the office of the Auditor General is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly that conducts value-for-money audits?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: They do value-for-money audits, yes; they do.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Of provincial government agencies, ministries, boards.

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: Sure.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Would you say and agree that the office of the Attorney General—

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: Auditor General.

Ms. Donna Skelly:—Auditor General, sorry—is also able to conduct value-for-money audits for broader public sector boards, agencies, hospitals, long-term-care facilities etc.?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: That's what I understand they do, yes; the MUSH sector.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Do you believe that the Auditor General does a good job?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: By and large, on value-for-money issues, but let me say that if you look at the work that they do on environmental matters—and I will give you a very simple example. This is not very technical. You go to a special report that the Auditor General did in 2015 on winter road maintenance. It's a 40-page report and it's essentially about the Ministry of Transportation and the use of road salt. In that 40-page report, there is not one word about the fact that road salt is an enormous problem for municipalities dependent on groundwater. That was in 2015. The Auditor General has had environmental expertise on its staff for a long time, and to have a 40-page document with not one word about that very costly issue for municipalities like Waterloo gives me pause and gives me concern.

Ms. Donna Skelly: If I may, I would suggest that they were looking at a specific issue on cost. But let's just move back to something. Is there anything in this particular bill that would prevent any environmental group or any environmental organization from coming and speaking to their elected officials or from coming and speaking to this commission?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: Nothing to prevent them, but there is no independent voice at Queen's Park anymore that can hold the ministry's feet to the fire and the ministry—

Ms. Donna Skelly: If I may, isn't that what these commissions are about and these presentations from independent groups? It gives them the opportunity that they do indeed still have a voice.

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: Do you mean that they could come to an event like this and speak for five minutes? That is nothing whatsoever like what the Environmental Commissioner's office—

Ms. Donna Skelly: But they still have a voice. They still can come and make their voices and their concerns—

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: Their voice has been remarkably reduced.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: I don't know if you're familiar with the federal structure.

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: With the environmental commissioner at the federal level.

Mr. Doug Downey: Yes. Can I maybe have you comment on that structure?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: I think it's very inadequate. I will also say this: You have to remember that in a federation like Canada, the provinces do the heavy lifting on environmental matters. When it comes to issues like regulating sand and gravel, or giving somebody approval to take groundwater—groundwater that local neighbourhoods depend on—or regulating furry animals, scaly animals, right across the board, it's the provinces that do the heavy lifting. That's why it is absolutely vital that we, with our significant natural resources, have a strong Environmental Commissioner, free and independent to speak directly at Queen's Park.

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Mr. Doug Downey: Are you suggesting that the federal government is derelict? Or is it just not within their mandate?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: I don't recommend that we revert to that kind of a mechanism.

Mr. Doug Downey: But I'm asking very clearly whether you're saying they're failing at what they're doing or if it's not within their mandate.

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: I'm saying they have a different system and they have different rules and responsibilities. I don't recommend that Ontario take that approach.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Just to build on your free and independent—are other organizations not free and independent to voice their concerns at Queen's Park with elected officials, with the minister etc.?

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: It's the honest broker ability for the Environmental Commissioner to speak without fear or favour to all parties and to serve all—

Mr. David Piccini: Sorry; just quickly, because we only have a minute—are you suggesting, then, that the

independent groups aren't honest brokers or that they're not free to speak to—

Ms. Ellen Schwartzel: I'm saying that it would be unlikely that an MPP who had a very problematic, festering issue in their riding related to environment would bring in an environmental group. What they really would want to do is, they'd really want to bring the Environmental Commissioner—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll now move on to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Welcome. Please state your names and your organization and then proceed right away.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: My name is Lynn Dollin. I'm past president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and mayor-elect of the town of Innisfil. With me is Pat Vanini, executive director of AMO. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to your deliberations on this bill.

For those on the committee who may not know the association, we represent almost all of the 444 municipal governments in this province. While Toronto is not an active member, we do liaise and work with them on shared policy interests, including labour-related matters.

I believe the Clerk has provided you with a copy of our written submission and our recommendations for amendments to one schedule which have direct application to municipal governments. We also comment on three other schedules, without recommendations, of municipal interest. My remarks will not cover the entire written submission but will highlight a few of its recommendations. I urge you to please read the entire submission.

AMO is supportive of the changes Bill 57 makes to the Municipal Act, schedule 27, and to the Construction Act, schedule 8. The proposed amendments in these schedules bring clarity that we have offered to previous committees, and we're very pleased to see them addressed now.

We also appreciate the sentiment with respect to exempting Canadian Legion halls in Ontario from paying property taxes. They do provide support to veterans and their families. The challenge for municipal governments, however, is how we spread the impact of the exemption to others without causing them hardship.

I want to turn your attention to schedule 18, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. AMO is delighted that the government is taking clear action to resolve the double-hatter issue that has plagued these individuals for years. We have seen them give up their smaller community fire halls in response to threats of being charged by their own union or members of other unions. Double-hatters are career firefighters in one community and have a strong desire to contribute to their home community by using their talents when available in their off-hours.

The real root of the issue is freedom of the individual—in this case, firefighters—to use their time off as they wish

and without reprisal. As a member of Innisfil council, I have seen first-hand the struggle that double-hatters go through when they're charged by their unions with the threat of fines and eventually loss of employment—other councils have too.

To be clear, affected full-time employers support our cause, and they would like to see them protected as well. The protections for double-hatters in this schedule are long overdue and they are most welcome. We ask for an amendment. The expansion of the "volunteer" definition in part I and in part IX, subsection 41(2.1) to include double-hatters inadvertently means that double-hatters are removed from the definition of "firefighters" in part IX. That is not the intended result.

Keeping with schedule 18, we also support the changes to the fire interest arbitration process. It is rebalancing the framework and creating some efficiencies in the meantime. Moving from a three-member panel to a single arbitrator makes sense. This mirrors the approach for police interest arbitration. Scheduling will be better and provide more timely decisions.

Changing the criteria that puts the local municipal government's circumstances more clearly and correctly within the decision-making process of an arbitrator is very welcome. The proposed new criteria signals a change. It will provide for the opportunity for municipal employers to make arguments at the bargaining table and at interest arbitration.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Local fiscal circumstances need fiscal information. An arbitrator will need to consider it, demonstrate how it relates to the award, the criteria to determine or guarantee arbitration outcomes—and at the same time, local circumstances cannot be passed over for arbitration to simply replicate fire service awards elsewhere across the province. We are supportive of the intent of the change and are providing 12 important amendments in interest arbitration.

Two additional key critical amendments: First, deleting the phrase "changes to" in front of the listed criteria. There are communities with consistently stagnant economic situations or low population growth, and they will not be able to show that the economic data has changed. We would submit that this is worthy for consideration.

Secondly, an obligation for an arbitrator to consider what municipal employers have done with non-unionized staff compensation as well as unionized: We think it relevant for an arbitrator to—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut you off.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We're going to go to questions now. From the government side, Ms. Skelly?

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's Lynn?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Yes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you both for being here today. If I recall, was Innisfil not the municipality that first brought the whole issue of double-hatters to the attention

of the general public? Would you say that it was about five or six years ago?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: I think it was longer than five or six years ago, but yes, we were ground zero. All of our double-hatters were charged and sent letters, and told that if they did not quit double-hatting, or volunteering in their home community, they would be fined.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I recall that, in my previous life, I worked on a television show and I think I interviewed somebody from your community about it. It was the first time I had understood the pressures that municipalities face not being allowed to use volunteer firefighters. I was really quite surprised.

Could you expand on the impact of a decision to prevent volunteer firefighters in a small municipality? How much of a pressure is that on the finances of a smaller municipality?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Absolutely. Many of our small urban and rural municipalities work on volunteer firefighters. While they are properly trained and outfitted, we still have the ability to draw on the expertise of people who want to volunteer in their home community but are full-time firefighters in other communities. It's worked well.

We know that larger municipalities, when they're hiring full-time career firefighters, will often draw from volunteer firefighters from other communities, so we see it as a win-win situation for both.

They are great volunteers in their communities, everything from Santa Claus parades to flooding ice rinks and everything else in between. They are the lifeblood of our community, both the volunteers and the double-hatters.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I was going to say—I should have clarified: It was the double-hatter issue, the fact that they were unable to volunteer. Some of these people are full-time firefighters in larger cities and have homes or a cottage in a different area. Obviously, if you are a smaller municipality, you're constantly facing financial challenges. This was a wonderful way of being able to provide a very valuable service.

I know one of my colleagues wanted to jump in as well.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm in the riding of Peterborough-Kawartha. It's 2,300 square kilometres in my riding. The city of Peterborough makes up 85,000 of 150,000 or so that are in my riding. The city of Peterborough is about 220 of the 2,300 square kilometres, so we have roughly 65,000 people who live in that 1,800-square-kilometre area.

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We were affected by double-hatters significantly in the municipalities. There's eight municipalities around the city, and most of the professional firefighters in the city live in the townships. They didn't want to do anything that was going to jeopardize their jobs, but they also wanted to help out their neighbours. Most of those communities are about 5,000 people, give or take. If those small municipalities had to go to a professional firefighter service that was 24 hours, the same as what's in a large urban area, what

would that do to the tax base and what would that do to the property taxes that those smaller communities currently have?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: It's not even fathomable. We have 37,000 people in my community and five fire halls. You just can't staff them—not to mention that the volunteer halls would have to be totally rebuilt because they're not made for full-time firefighters to be sleeping and living in these halls.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: It couldn't happen.

Ms. Pat Vanini: Just from a salary/benefit perspective, full-time firefighters are starting to get very close to the \$100,000 mark of the sunshine list. That's for one, so you replicate that and it would have really significant impacts on municipal taxation.

Mr. Dave Smith: How many person-hours would it be each day? Are we looking at five or six people per shift and a 24-hour shift?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: In a small hall, you'd be looking at at least 12 full-time firefighters per hall.

Mr. Dave Smith: So approximately \$1.2 million spread out over 4,000 people. Wow.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We have about 20 seconds left. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'll just say thank you to the mayor-elect, who's my neighbour in the neighbouring riding. Glad to have you here. AMO is always a well-respected voice, and so I know we've just scratched the surface, but I look forward to working with you more. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll now move to the opposition side. Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your presentation. Currently, firefighters as a public essential service are not permitted to strike or be locked out. What they have instead is the interest arbitration which you touched on there a little bit.

Mark Train from the OPFFA, in his written submission to this committee, pointed out that "the inclusion of union and employer nominees in the interest arbitration reflects the extent to which interest arbitration is less an adjudicative process, where the adjudicator looks for the legally correct answer, than an accommodative process and a process of extended negotiation, where the nominees serve as proxy negotiators, and where the tripartite board of arbitration seeks to arrive at an outcome which reflects to the extent possible the outcome that would have been bargained if the right to strike were not prohibited.

"What has, over the last many decades, made loss of the right to strike acceptable in the firefighter sector, and maintained the confidence of firefighters in the interest arbitration process, is the tripartite nature of the process...."

By removing these fundamental safeguards, it "risks undermining the integrity and acceptability of the interest arbitration process, essential features identified by both the Supreme Court of Canada and international labour conventions binding on Canada."

Do you agree or disagree with these changes, and could you elaborate on that a little bit?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Sure. I do agree with the changes. Police also fall under that interest arbitration, and if it's good enough for police, I think it's good enough for firefighters as well.

Mr. Ian Arthur: But to be very clear, the proposed changes are not actually the same as what the police use. They have the right to go back to use a three-person board if they want to—that's my understanding—whereas this is mandated on firefighters. To compare it to the police one is a bit of a misnomer, I believe.

Ms. Pat Vanini: If I might.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Yes, of course.

Ms. Pat Vanini: In practice, it's generally a single arbitrator in police—

Mr. Ian Arthur: Generally, yes, but not required.

Ms. Pat Vanini:—and the process is much more efficient. In the fire three-member-panel approach that was mandatory, a lot of decisions sometimes took more than two years—a decision of the panel, not the process—to come out. So I don't think from a process perspective, looking at timing—a lot of the other requirements in here basically mirror a lot of the other processes etc. At the end of the day, there's still the ability to do freely negotiated agreements.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That's true, but by saying it basically mirrors it, you're acknowledging that there is a difference between what is required of police officers and firefighters?

Ms. Pat Vanini: In practice, police decisions have never taken two to three years to come out. I think, in terms of providing the submission beforehand, particularly in a one-panel piece—puts equal onus on both parties. Our perspective is that this process is actually a fairly balanced process. It does not guarantee any particular outcomes. It does put more onus on arbitrators to take a look at information that they should be looking at.

So, yes—is it a change? Does it prescribe outcomes? Absolutely not.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: That's why we're asking for the amendment, as far as looking at what the other unions in the municipality negotiated, as far as that they do have the ability to strike and the ability to pay. The taxpayer is really, really grateful to know that the ability to pay—right now with the arbitration system, means you have the ability to pay; you can raise the property taxes. But the taxpayer is not happy to hear that.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Changing tacks a little bit here: The fall economic statement and its corresponding piece of legislation, Bill 57, talked about how local governments benefit from a range of provincial transfer payments. But all partners, including municipalities—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Ian Arthur:—will have to start to justify these payments. Are you worried about what actions municipalities are going to have to take to accommodate this?

Ms. Pat Vanini: The broad statement: I would suggest that we have that interest no matter who forms the government at any point in time—between upload, transfer payments etc. Our role at AMO is to, quite frankly, stand on guard to make sure that municipal governments can do the jobs that they're mandated. So do we have an interest? Yes.

Mr. Ian Arthur: So you're not worried about the withholding of provincial transfer payments based on certain criteria that the government can impose on municipalities?

Ms. Pat Vanini: The statement in the bill isn't an outcome statement; it's a statement. We have to, obviously, have more conversations with the province. I would say that Bill 57 is a good indication of how they're trying to provide some help to municipal governments so that they aren't further impacted financially.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll now move on to Children's Mental Health Ontario. Please state your names for the record and proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Kimberly Moran: Kim Moran.

Ms. Mary-Anne Leahy: Mary-Anne Leahy.

Ms. Kimberly Moran: Hello. My name is Kim Moran. I'm here with my colleague Mary-Anne.

I'm the CEO of Children's Mental Health Ontario. I'm also a chartered professional accountant.

I acknowledge that we're facing a tough economic reality in Ontario. I appreciate that as members of this committee, you'll be tasked with finding efficiencies and advising on sound economic investments.

I also want to commend the government on its commitment to invest \$3.8 billion in mental health and addictions over the next 10 years, and on identifying reducing wait times and early intervention as top priorities in the fall economic statement.

My goal today is to demonstrate to this committee that the child and youth mental health system in this province has been grossly neglected by the government for decades. Chronic underfunding has led to a system focused on crisis rather than early intervention and treatment. Youth can't get the treatment they need due to long wait times and the unavailability of services. This means that they too often end up in crisis and often in emergency departments. This is an inefficient and costly situation. Most importantly, youth and families are struggling.

I know that you all agree with me that Ontario families deserve to receive mental health treatment when and where they need it.

I'm a parent of a child who has struggled with a severe mental illness. My family struggled for months—years, even—to get the right treatment. Sadly, so many other families continue, and will continue, to struggle until strategic investments are made.

A recent Ipsos study commissioned by CMHO found that half of parents who sought help said they faced challenges in getting the service they needed. The primary reason cited was long wait times.

In different parts of the province, you can wait up to 18 months for mental health treatment. In Oakville, kids can wait an average of six months, and some kids can wait up to 24 months for treatment. In Ottawa, kids who have very serious mental health issues can wait over a year. In the north, there are no intensive treatment services, and those kids have to come south.

While kids wait for treatment, they get sicker. Many of them end up in the emergency room. Some are admitted to the hospital, like mine was. This is unacceptable. We would never ask a youth with a broken leg to wait for treatment. So not only is the mental health system failing families; over five years it's unnecessarily costing the province and taxpayers \$1 billion extra in hospital costs—\$1 billion. That's inefficient, ineffective and can't continue.

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But we have a plan based on evidence and data that the government can implement. This plan will ensure that youth get the treatment they need and deliver savings to the government. By leveraging our existing assets in child and youth mental health centres across Ontario, and investing \$150 million in child and youth mental health centres throughout the province, we can:

- ensure access to counselling and therapy within 30 days;

- make longer-term and intensive treatments available to kids when and where they need it; and

- scale crisis support services to ensure kids and families don't have to go to the emergency department.

Together, we have a unique opportunity to end this crisis, a crisis that exists in all of our communities, in all of our ridings. I implore you today to help us end this crisis.

Ms. Mary-Anne Leahy: Hello. I work for the New Mentality, a provincial network of youth with mental illness who are working towards creating a mental health system in Ontario that works for young people—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Sorry, could you just state your name for the record, please?

Ms. Mary-Anne Leahy: Mary-Anne Leahy.

My work allows me to meet young people from across the province and hear their experience receiving mental health treatment. I've had the privilege to meet some really just amazing, incredibly talented, resilient young people whose futures are just full of potential, but they are fighting against the odds because they have mental illness and, without intensive mental health treatment, their futures are up in the air.

These youth are literally fighting for their lives in a system that is not currently set up to support them. We know that the ultimate cost of this is suicide, but what happens if they are able to hold onto life, what happens when they become adults?

If you want to understand the effects of not treating young people with mental illness, I'd invite you over for my family Christmas dinner in Oakville, where my 38-year-old brother's mental illness has impacted the direction of his life and our family significantly; where a system failed him 29 years ago and our family and this government now must deal with the consequences, the consequences of a 38-year-old man who, at his core, is so smart, kind, and hard-working, but is now on long-term disability because his mental illness went untreated as a child.

And it's not like the signs weren't there. By the age of 7, I was aware of how ill my brother was. I was aware that he wanted to end his life, and as a little girl I did everything I could to keep him alive. My parents spent most of that year in and out of hospital, whether it be a suicide attempt or a drug overdose as he attempted to cope. From my understanding, my brother was given a social worker, but here we are 22 years later, still fighting for services, still fighting for services in the system—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll now start with the opposition side for questioning. Mr. Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for the presentation and thank you for the work that you do. I come from the most northerly riding in Ontario, and when we talk about children's mental health, access to mental health services is minimal at best and non-existent at worst.

Maybe if you can describe the value, for children and families with exposure to the children's mental health system, to have an advocate's office.

Ms. Kimberly Moran: Yes. I think that you touch on a number of really important points. There isn't sufficient intensive treatment in the north whatsoever. Kids have to travel way too far for treatment, and that doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense for the kids, for their families or for the cost to the system. We've identified that as being a really significant issue.

In respect of the advocate's office, that office gave a voice to kids who are often some of the most vulnerable kids we have in the province. Certainly, the evidence and data would suggest that having an independent voice for those kids is very important. I know that today when we reach out to youth, and Mary-Anne can talk about this, that is a loss that they're feeling. As a community, we have to make sure that those voices still have a way to get their concerns—because it's very important.

Mary-Anne, did you want to add to that?

Ms. Mary-Anne Leahy: Yes. Our youth are very stressed right now. They're feeling scared about not having the provincial advocate's office. A really key part to that office was the helpline where young people could call in when they had concerns, and that was something that was really important to our young people. They're very nervous about not having an independent body, they're really scared about the changes, and they don't know what—I don't even know how to say it, the "ombudsman's" office?

Interjection: Ombudsman.

Ms. Mary-Anne Leahy: Ombudsman. If we can't pronounce it, are they going to call it? How are they going to use this office?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your presentation. Along those lines, would you just elaborate a little bit on the difference between—anticipating a line of questioning that will come—an independent officer and the advocacy work that the youth advocate was able to do? Would you talk about the importance of that a little bit?

Ms. Kimberly Moran: Yes, and I'll let Mary-Anne speak to this, because she can speak to it—youth always can speak for themselves better than everybody else.

I would say that what we've seen across the globe, actually, is that an independent voice for kids typically has better impact. I would say, right now, as Mary-Anne has stated, that our kids are feeling a loss. They're feeling a loss of that independent voice. So I think that we go from—

Mr. Ian Arthur: Specifically, not just the independence of the voice, but would you talk about the advocacy work that the office did, and whether you thought that was an important part of the role that they had?

Ms. Kimberly Moran: The advocacy work that they played on an individual basis for kids and families, for kids who are in the care of child welfare systems, was incredibly important. We saw them intervene in numbers of situations. That advocacy piece was very important.

Mary-Anne, did you want to add to that?

Ms. Mary-Anne Leahy: Yes. It's really important that young people have a space where they can bring the issues they're actually experiencing in the system. They need to have a place where they can say, "This is an issue in the system, and we need you to advocate for us." They're the ones that are going to be able to bring that information forward, because we don't know, if we're not consumers of the system. It's a place that youth and families need.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: What I'm hearing is that the cost of the government's complacency of the children—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: —will be paid in full by children's lives if we take this away. Would you agree to that comment?

Ms. Kimberly Moran: I think that some of the most vulnerable people, the most vulnerable kids in our province, felt very comfortable speaking with the advocate and the staff, and that their issues would be raised. I think that ensuring they feel that they have that same person to call, who will do something about their issues, is very important to preserve.

Ms. Mary-Anne Leahy: Yes, I would agree with that.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Another 20 seconds. Any other questions? Okay.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We'll now go to the government side: Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: First off, I just want to thank both of you, Kim and Mary-Anne, for all the work that you

both are doing. Particularly, Mary-Anne, I really appreciate that you share a bit of your personal story as well, and what sort of drove you to get involved in this advocacy work.

I was struck, during the election, that whenever the subject of mental health would come up in a debate or at an all-candidates meeting, there was very little distance between the parties. I think everybody, right now, is on the same page in terms of moving forward on mental health initiatives.

I'm a member from Ottawa. We have the children's hospital, CHEO, in Ottawa. I had the chance to tour their mental health outpatient facility recently, which needs a lot of work, and then had the chance to sit down with the CEO of CHEO, Alex Munter, who has been involved in this sphere for quite a while as well. He was telling me about their exciting new project, which is their #1door4care initiative, the idea being that, right now, for children and families who are seeking mental health support, there are so many disparate places that they can go. The idea is, let's bring these resources under one roof.

I'd just like to ask you: Is that the general direction that you think governments and services organizations should be moving towards?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Roberts, excuse me.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just a point of order: We're discussing Bill 57, so how does the question relate to Bill 57?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: We're talking about making sure that we're providing adequate support for individuals with mental health issues.

I'd like to know: Is that an area in terms of centralizing support at one direct point of access, so that people have an easier time accessing those services?

Ms. Kimberly Moran: Certainly, navigation is a significant issue. The child and youth mental health system grew up, really, without a plan. It evolved from really well-meaning people in communities trying to provide services for kids that nobody else wanted to look after. I would say that in many communities, you see a centralized access piece very similar to that that's at CHEO.

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But I think the problem is: navigation to what? If you don't have navigation to services that are available in the community without wait times, then you're not really navigating to any services. We always talk about the fact that, absolutely, navigation needs to improve, without a doubt. But at the same time, capacity has to be there; because if we do a tremendous job making sure everybody knows where the services are, the wait times will be in the three- to four-year range.

To me, those functions have to be done in parallel. Let's improve the navigation and let's make sure every primary care doctor in the province knows where to refer their clients or patients, but at the same time, we have to deal with the capacity issue, because otherwise, we're navigating to no service or to wait times.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure. I couldn't agree more with that, that we need to make sure that our investments, that \$3.8 billion, are going to be targeting that capacity issue as well.

In terms of navigation, we've heard from a number of people that a lot of children and families are going to the Ombudsman's office first and are then being referred to the advocate's office. Do you not think that there is a chance here to have that clear navigation point to say, "We're going to have one access point where, when you need support advocating to the government, you can go to the Ombudsman's office"? Do you not think that that would help with the navigation issue?

Ms. Kimberly Moran: I haven't seen that data, so I couldn't comment on that piece. What I would say is that making sure, whatever form it takes, that kids very clearly understand where they have to go and that they feel like it's a friendly voice at the other end—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Kimberly Moran: The current child advocate has done a very good job of making kids feel comfortable in understanding where to phone and what services were going to happen. I would also say that the change initiatives need to start now, because kids are feeling very uncomfortable right now.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I appreciate that.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: I know, from Minister MacLeod's office, that 300-and-something cases from the Ombudsman were referred to the child advocate. If you could briefly comment, just in the context of our 12-point-something billion dollars, I'm PA for MTCU, and we spend triple our cumulative funding of Ontario post-secondary institutions on the interest on our debt. In the interests of trying to streamline, would you not feel those funds would be better used on front-line services for our youth?

Ms. Kimberly Moran: I think that all of us who have any interest in kids and families want to see funds spent very efficiently and effectively. There are a number of ways we can do that. One of the ways we pointed out is that we'll spend, actually, over the next five years over \$1 billion we don't need to spend by having kids go to hospitals. I think that there are a variety of ways we can—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut you off, but thank you very much.

TOWN OF CALEDON

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Our next witness is the town of Caledon. Welcome. If you could please state your names for the record and then begin right away with your presentation.

Mr. Allan Thompson: Sure. Mayor Allan Thompson.

Ms. Mandy Gould: Mandy Gould.

Mr. Allan Thompson: While I'm appearing before you today as the mayor of Caledon, my comments apply to small and rural Ontario communities.

We rely on volunteer firefighters' protection. Volunteer firefighters are full-time as firefighters in another community. They're called double-hatters when they come back to volunteer in their own community. Two-hatters protect our families, friends and neighbours in the communities where they live, including Caledon. Two-hatters should be thanked, not persecuted.

Two-hatters are often the backbone of rural and small fire services. They play significant leadership roles, very similar to what DC Gould does for our community. For small communities such as Caledon, with a large geographic area and a small tax base, funding a full-time professional fire service is impossible. This is a reality across rural Ontario and small Ontario towns.

Two-hatters are highly skilled. They step into senior positions for a hybrid force, like the one we have in Caledon. They train our volunteers; they're not working full-time as firefighters are in other municipalities. Without these highly-trained and skilled two-hatters, smaller municipalities would be forced to rely on volunteers who are much less skilled, which would decrease the safety of our community and other volunteer firefighters. Caledon invests significantly each year in the training of volunteer firefighters, which benefits both Caledon and other municipalities where the two-hatters have full-time employment.

Over Ontario, two-hatters are being forced out of their volunteer fire positions by the IAFF union. Municipalities don't talk about it because they don't want to expose their local double-hatters. Thank you for Bill 57, for the protection of the small communities. We need to ensure the safety of their communities as well.

I will now turn it over to DC Gould.

Ms. Mandy Gould: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Again, my name is Mandy, and I've been a full-time firefighter with the city of Brampton since March 2007. I'm an acting captain.

While I work in Brampton, I grew up and still live in Caledon. My father was a volunteer firefighter for 25 years. I've worked as a part-time volunteer firefighter in Caledon since 2003—in that, I turned 18.

Since 2007, when I started with the Brampton fire service, I have been a two-hatter. I love my work as a Caledon volunteer firefighter. Caledon fire services launched my career, and, for that, I'm forever grateful. It is incredibly important to me to be able to use my firefighting training and experience to contribute as a volunteer firefighter to the safety of my community of Caledon. My contribution is also important to Caledon, as the community and other volunteer firefighters rely upon me.

The International Association of Fire Fighters' union tried to force me and other Caledon volunteer firefighters to stop working as volunteers. I refused. So did six other Caledon two-hatter volunteers. The seven of us were charged with misconduct under the union's constitution for working as two-hatters. Two of the two-hatters were intimidated into resigning as Caledon volunteers. The remaining five of us were tried and found guilty of misconduct simply because we were working as volunteers in

Caledon. The union suspended us from membership and fined us. I have now been fined \$18,000, and the amount of the fine is increasing by \$2,000 each month.

I am grateful that Bill 57 will enable me to continue to serve my community of Caledon as a volunteer firefighter and that my suspension and the fines imposed upon us will be erased.

I am particularly grateful that, going forward, no two-hatter will ever again be subject to the type of prosecution, harassment and discrimination that my colleagues and I have suffered over the past two years and that the union will not be able to force two-hatters—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Mandy Gould: —to abandon work which is so important to them and their home communities. Thank you for protecting me and rural Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We'll now start with questioning from the government side: Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Caledon—I remember the stories. I remember reading the newspapers about your experience and of your colleagues. I can't imagine the personal toll that has taken. Has it brought you into contact with others across the province and their experience? Was it a localized issue that was just reported on, or was it happening everywhere?

Mr. Allan Thompson: It's starting to happen more everywhere. A lot of communities across Ontario are supporting Caledon and our double-hatters as well. The support across Ontario has been phenomenal.

Mr. Doug Downey: Has Caledon had a chance as a corporation to do some of the calculations on what the impact would be if you had to do a full-time paid force?

Mr. Allan Thompson: I don't think we really have done a hard analysis. We have over 300 firefighters, and out of that, I think we have about 34 full-time. That's including our chief and our two deputy chiefs as well. The rest are a full-time fire force that is required as needed. As we're growing in certain parts of our community, we have to increase that, but everywhere else, volunteers are very suitable for what we need. We're a big geographical area. We're 731 square kilometres.

Mr. Doug Downey: It certainly gives rise to a sense of magnitude, if not specific dollar values.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini?

Mr. David Piccini: Just briefly for the benefit of everyone, I just have to personally, coming from rural Ontario and Northumberland—Peterborough South, thank you for the advocacy work that you've done. I've spoken to firefighters who have mentioned you guys and the work that you've done. I know, in rural communities, the importance of having that ability to rely on experts who travel into Durham and into the city to do their work but who are able to help out and save lives. It has meant that on weekends and nights, people can rest easy knowing that they have experts on call.

Just if you could just elaborate for everyone briefly on just rural Ontario and why it's so important that we're not limiting professionals' ability.

Mr. Allan Thompson: If you want me to answer, here's my question back: Why is it just Ontario that has our firefighters being persecuted? This is an international firefighter union. Anywhere in the States, it's fine; anywhere else in Canada, other than Newfoundland, they're having this issue. Why is that?

Mr. David Piccini: Closing Ontario for business.

1520

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much for coming in. If I understand correctly, someone who is a professional firefighter is paid to do the job, but when they're back home in their rural area, they're volunteering to do it. Could you just briefly touch on what it is about a firefighter that makes them want to do what they do for free for their community?

Ms. Mandy Gould: Whether or not you are compensated for what you do depends on the area that you live in in rural Ontario. Like I said, my dad was a volunteer for 25 years, and for me, it's a moral and ethical choice to serve my community. That community raised me and I feel that I need to give back. It's not always about running fire calls and emergency calls; it's also about the great volunteer work that we do for our communities: toy drives, car washes. We raise money for hospice and needy families. Much of it is giving back to our community.

Again, these people I am serving are family, friends, neighbours, and sometimes they are complete strangers. But it's a tight-knit community and, like I said, that community raised me and I have a moral and ethical choice to give back to them.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Dave Smith: Let me get this straight: You want to do something good for your community. You want to make your community a better place. You want to give back to the people who have helped you throughout your life, and people are telling you, "Don't do that"?

Ms. Mandy Gould: Yes.

Mr. Dave Smith: It sounds a little counter-intuitive to me. If you want to give back to your community, if you want to make a positive difference in the lives of others, and someone is telling you you shouldn't do that, that sounds pretty small-minded to me.

Ms. Mandy Gould: Absolutely, and that's why I'm here today, to advocate for not only myself but the thousands of others who are in my position. They secretly volunteer, they've been bullied out of positions, and they've resigned because they don't want to challenge a large union such as the international or the OPFFA.

Mr. David Piccini: Sorry, just to—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Sorry, Mr. Piccini, we're up on time now.

We'll now go to the opposition side for five minutes of questioning. Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your presentation. There has been an argument made that double-hatting can lower safety standards because of the on-job, off-job time requirements when you are a professional firefighter. In addition to that, it's becoming a lot harder to

parse out the on-the-job injuries and illnesses that potentially happen when a professional firefighter is volunteering in another municipality.

From the municipality's standpoint, is there any framework—like, if double-hatting becomes more common, have you established a framework to decide which municipality pays, for instance, for a WSIB claim?

Mr. Allan Thompson: If anything happens within our municipality as a volunteer, they are covered as a volunteer.

Mr. Ian Arthur: But do you think it's very easy to identify where the specific event was that might have caused the illness, or do you think there's room for ambiguity there?

Mr. Allan Thompson: Possibly, but I'm not aware that's an issue. It's hearsay, and if it is hearsay, why hasn't that come up in any other province or any other state in North America?

Ms. Mandy Gould: I'll also add that there is presumptive legislation that does cover us. Again, it's not on where it happened; it's years of service.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay. The Ford government recently rolled back mandatory training and certification regulations that the Liberals had introduced for volunteer firefighters. I understand that AMO certainly supported that. Now, what is your opinion or your municipality's opinion on that? Do you think that would have changed if the government had come forward with a funding framework?

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Yes?

Mr. Dave Smith: That's not in the scope of this committee. It's not dealing with Bill 57. The questions have to deal with Bill 57, not another bill that we've had.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Yes, okay.

I don't have any more questions.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Mr. Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: You mentioned that it was based on your years of service. Can you elaborate on that? Based on your years of service—so you've been exposed because it goes through your skin. It's very courageous of you just to do that work, to be honest with you.

You say it's based on your years of service. Who covers that—the province or the municipalities? It depends on how many years of service you were in this municipality and that municipality? Can you explain more so I understand?

Ms. Mandy Gould: Yes. It can be combined years of service, so in a whole, but it's covered by WSIB.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: And if it falls into dispute? I'm just curious what happens.

Ms. Mandy Gould: Well, they can look back to see. We have exposure reports, so they can look back to see potentially or to try and narrow down a specific cause. But, again, sometimes that's hard to do, so they look at your years of services.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: If it falls into dispute, you're the individual who gets dinged.

Ms. Mandy Gould: Sorry, what was the last part of that question?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: If it comes into dispute with WSIB, it's the firefighter who gets impacted.

Ms. Mandy Gould: Impacted because of disease, or impacted financially?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Because of the exposure.

Ms. Mandy Gould: I guess that's a risk you take being a firefighter in general, right?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: No.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate it.

Ms. Mandy Gould: Thank you.

ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR TENANTS ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Next I would like to call up the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. If you could please state your name for the record and begin your presentation.

Mr. Kenneth Hale: My name is Kenneth Hale. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Kenneth Hale, and I'm the legal director of the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. We are a community legal aid clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario to provide legal services to low-income tenants across Ontario, particularly on systemic issues like legislation that impacts their rents. As such, I am here to address schedule 36.

Seeing schedule 36 in the bill indicates to us that the government recognizes that there are problems in the rental housing market. But from the tenant point of view, the amendments proposed in the schedule will only make things worse. We urge this committee to recommend to the Legislature that this schedule not be enacted.

Ontario's private rental market has two big problems. One is that rents are too high. We recently issued a report called *Where Will We Live? Ontario's Affordable Rental Housing Crisis*. It shows that nearly half of Ontario tenants are paying rents that they can't afford. This particularly hits people in the 25-to-34-year-old age bracket, the same people who are most affected by the freezing of the minimum wage and other measures to keep wages down. Allowing unjustified rent increases will not help this problem but will make the problem worse.

The other problem is that there is not an adequate supply of rental housing. This has negative consequences for tenants: lack of choice, restricted mobility, and possibility of rent-gouging by landlords taking advantage of the scarcity. The government's message is, "Exempting new units from rent control is a better way to encourage developers ... to build more rental housing." Tenants generally support government measures that encourage the building of more rental housing, but is it true that this exemption will create more supply?

The Residential Tenancies Act requires rent increases for sitting tenants to be justified: Either it's justified in the form of an automatic increase adjusting the rent for

inflation, or through Landlord and Tenant Board approval of a larger increase. Schedule 36 would exempt residential rental units first occupied after November 15, 2018. Once every year, when the tenancy is renewed, a landlord could raise the rent in an unlimited amount without any justification, even if this goes beyond the tenant's ability to pay and, so, force them out of their home. Surely, we can all agree that economic eviction is a negative social impact.

Even rent increases that are justified can lead to rent increases beyond tenants' ability to pay, but at least the rules in the Residential Tenancies Act try to mitigate that negative impact and hold the landlord accountable for causing that impact. We think that a housing policy that creates negative impacts without any accountability is not the kind of housing policy that people really want. So why would the Legislature support a change to the law that removes accountability?

There have been many variations in the rent-regulation laws over the last 43 years, but they've had some common features. They've always permitted landlords to charge whatever they could get when a unit is first rented. Since 1995, they've been permitted to charge whatever rent they could get when a new tenant moves into any unit. And since 1991, the laws have exempted landlords of new housing from justifying rent increases. That's what the government is proposing to bring back in schedule 36.

1530

It's only for the last 19 months that this exemption was removed, and, as you probably know, 19 months is not a long time in the world of housing development, so it's impossible for anyone to prove that this change has had any impact on investment in rental housing. But there were over 25 years when the exemption of new units from rent control was allowed to continue; that's plenty of time to see the impact. And what was the impact? Lots of housing was built in those 25 years—58,000 a year. Hardly any of it was rental housing. Out of over a million and a half units, only 129,000 were rental housing, less than 9% of the total; 91% was homeownership.

Based on population growth, we needed about 10,000 new rental units every year, but we got less than 4,700. The landlord's unlimited right to raise rents did nothing to increase the supply. This gets back to tenants' ability to pay—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. I appreciate your testimony. We do have to move to questions now.

We'll start with the opposition side. Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your presentation. I very much appreciate you coming and sharing your views.

Bill 57 purports that it's going to help with affordable housing. What do you think are the practical outcomes—the on-the-ground outcomes—of the legislation, as it is currently written? Do you think it will address affordable housing in any way, shape or form, or do you think it will make it worse?

Mr. Kenneth Hale: I think that it will make it worse. It doesn't address affordable rental housing. Any new

housing that is built is going to be near the upper end of the spectrum, so it's not going to help the people who really need the help. The right to raise the rent an unlimited amount is only worthwhile if you've got tenants who can pay an unlimited rent increase. The fact that half of Ontario's tenants make less than \$40,000 a year—you can have the right to raise the rent to \$1 million, but if the tenant can only pay \$800, you're going to be left with a vacant apartment, and are you really contributing anything? Does that increase contribute anything? Who is going to invest the money just to get the right to unlimited increases that they may not be able to collect?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much for that answer.

Then would you say that the legislation, as written, and the lifting of the rent controls will actually make the housing crisis in Ontario worse?

Mr. Kenneth Hale: It certainly won't do anything to make it better. It will make it worse for those few people who move into those new units and who end up being forced out because their rent was increased without any accountability.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Is there anything else that you would like to add to your testimony?

Mr. Kenneth Hale: I think that there are answers to the problem of the supply of affordable housing. The community housing sector has proposed an affordable housing plan for Ontario which requires the province to co-operate with the federal government under the National Housing Strategy and actually invest in affordable rental housing and fixing up the existing rental housing that the government community sector owns, and which would offer housing allowances. There's a plan there that our allies in the non-profit housing sector have put forward that really provides some real answers. Instead of addressing that really concrete plan, this idea that has been proven to be false is resurrected again and trying to be sold as an idea that this is going to contribute something to the building of affordable housing.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Morrison.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Hi. Thank you for your testimony.

Would you be able to elaborate at all on any concerns that you have with the risks of using rent increases without the rent control protections on tenant rights, and how that could circumvent tenant rights?

Mr. Kenneth Hale: I think the legislation—since 1975, we've recognized that tenants should have the right to not be evicted without a proper legal cause and, along with that, that we have to regulate rent increases, because if tenants are forced to pay rents they can't afford, they're going to be evicted. Rent control is all part of this package that keeps people in a secure home and allows them to be members of the community.

The more and more people who are excluded from that protection means they're vulnerable to arbitrary eviction; that they don't have that protection.

We think that protection is really fundamental to building good communities. Taking it away from the new housing that we hope is going to be built—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Kenneth Hale: —doesn't contribute anything to building communities and to that safety and security that we think is so important.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Do you have any further questions?

Ms. Suze Morrison: No, I'm good.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. We'll move to the government side. We've got five minutes of questions. Mr. Roberts?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much, Ken, for being here today and for sharing your thoughts on this. You spoke a bit earlier about there not being an adequate supply out there of affordable rental units, and you feel very strongly that this particular policy isn't going to help with that particular issue.

I'm just curious: Do you believe that there are any private builders out there who see an opportunity to build affordable housing and make a profit for themselves while also creating new units?

Mr. Kenneth Hale: As a result of this exemption?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Just in general.

Mr. Kenneth Hale: Or just in general?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Do you think that there are private builders who see opportunities within this market, given the high demand that's out there?

Mr. Kenneth Hale: Yes, and I think that throughout the last 43 years of rent regulation, certain developers and investors have seen opportunities and they've taken those opportunities up. The problem is, the magnitude of their participation has not met the need, and what they're able to deliver, under current market conditions, people can't afford. We need something a little more thoughtful and creative than what we've been doing.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Why do you think that they're not finding the situation profitable right now to build more affordable units? What do you think the barrier is out there?

Mr. Kenneth Hale: Well, I'm not in that business. I'm looking at it from the consumer's point of view. But I see that we have the Condominium Act and the Planning Act, which promote ownership housing to a higher income bracket, and that we advantage single-family homes and certain kinds of housing over affordable rental. There are tax breaks, zoning regulations and things that encourage—

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: A lot of red tape.

Mr. Kenneth Hale: No, it's not red tape. It's forcing investment into a more profitable segment by appealing to a more affluent part of the population. A lot of housing has been built in this province over the last 20 years, but it's difficult for people that we work with.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: But, obviously, not enough supply to keep up. You mentioned that you yourself aren't in the housing-building industry, and I accept that completely. I've had a number of developers who have come to meet with me over the past little while, since I've been elected, who have said to me that they would be very interested in building new buildings with affordable housing, but they simply do not think that it's a worthy

investment, given some of the red tape and some of the issues involved with rent control. Why do you think they might be feeling that way?

Mr. Kenneth Hale: They're not looking to break even. They're looking to make the maximum possible return for their investment, because that's their job. They gave the same line to the NDP in the 1990s; they gave it to the Mike Harris government; they gave it to the Liberals; they're giving it to you: "Exempt new buildings from rent control, and we'll build and build and build." They didn't do it for the last 25 years, and they're not going to do it now. All it is going to do is leave a bunch of people vulnerable to arbitrary rent increases.

Look at some of the things that are actually going to provide that housing. If they're going to build a subdivision for rich people, they should be required to provide a certain number of housing units for the people who aren't rich.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: So if the demand is there, you're saying that they're not going to follow it.

Mr. Kenneth Hale: We don't have effective demand. Effective demand means that you need the thing and you have the money to pay for it. But the people that we represent don't have the money to pay for new units and don't have the money to pay unlimited rent increases, and it doesn't seem like they're going to be getting any help from this government in increasing their income.

1540

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: The ones I'm talking to definitely see an opportunity to provide more affordable housing while also making a profit.

Now, you mentioned a bit earlier as well that you see these folks that are going to build units and they're going to want to charge exorbitantly high rent that nobody can afford. I just wonder: Why do you think that they would want to charge that exorbitantly high rent if there's no demand for it? Don't you think they would actually want to charge something where they could make a profit?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you, Mr. Roberts. We've reached our five-minute mark with this. Thank you for your testimony. We appreciate it.

Mr. Kenneth Hale: Thank you.

FEDERATION OF RENTAL HOUSING PROVIDERS OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Next we'll have the Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario. If you could please state your name for the record and your organization and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Tony Irwin: Good afternoon. My name is Tony Irwin. I'm the president and CEO of the Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario.

Mr. Chairman, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you all today. FRHPO, as we are known, is the largest association in the province representing those who own, manage, build and finance, as well as those who service and supply residential rental homes.

FRHPO represents more than 2,200 members who own or manage over 350,000 units across Ontario. We have been the leading voice of Ontario's rental housing industry for over 30 years.

I'm here today to speak to you about schedule 36 of Bill 57, the proposed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act, as you just heard something about from the previous speaker.

The changes included in the schedule create the exemption for rent control for new units first occupied after November 15, 2018, the day of the fall economic statement. On behalf of rental housing providers in Ontario, I want to commend the government for taking this important first step to ensure Ontarians have adequate access to rental housing in an environment where vacancies remain at historic low levels and barriers to building new housing, including rental, are abundant.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.—CMHC—released their 2018 rental market report last week, and the situation remains dire. Ontario has a vacancy rate of just 1.8%, while the city of Toronto has a vacancy rate of 1.1%, both well below the 3% threshold needed for what experts consider to be a healthy vacancy rate. Simply put, supply of rental housing is not keeping up with demand in the province of Ontario. A study conducted by Urbanation last year concluded that Ontario is likely to have a deficit of 62,000 rental units within a decade if substantial policy measures are not taken to incent new construction.

Rental housing providers have to make decisions on whether to proceed with development or not. In an environment of rising interest rates and escalating construction costs, government policies incenting development become even more important to building decisions. That is why creating an exemption from rent control for new units will move the needle toward “go” from “no go” in many cases where our members are evaluating project opportunities. It is a concrete measure intended to get more rental housing built in the province and it is a measure that addresses affordability.

The housing affordability challenge in this province is directly tied to the fundamental issue of supply shortage. Simple economics tells us that adding new supply creates downward pressure on rents in the overall market, including the existing stock. This measure is a good first step, but there are many other barriers to building and operating rental housing in the province, including an inefficient Landlord and Tenant Board process and red tape in development approvals. That is why FRHPO welcomes the government's intention to establish a Housing Supply Action Plan to look at other barriers to building more housing in Ontario. We look forward to participating in that process and we thank the government for taking this important first step to ensuring Ontarians have access to a mix of housing options that meet their needs.

Thank you, and I'll be happy to answer your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start now with questioning from the government side, so Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm curious if you see the trends when people are—we have more supply, which if we will have more supply, will allow for more home ownership; people who are currently renting may be moving out of rental spaces, other people moving in. Is that what you're talking about when you're talking about more supply? It's not necessarily the newly built places—the newly vacated places.

Mr. Tony Irwin: Certainly there's a filtering in the marketplace, so whether that be in the rental marketplace—I mean, I think I heard earlier conversation around how builders will build what there's a demand for, so new buildings are built because there's a demand for those buildings. Other people who are currently living elsewhere may move into those units, allowing those units to open up—certainly, as you said, others may move from rental apartments to owning their own home. There's all kinds of movement that will occur, but one thing has to happen first that's fundamental, and that's that we need new supply to allow people the options they don't currently have and the opportunity to move to different types of accommodation that better meet their needs.

Mr. Doug Downey: Does your organization feel that the government should dictate the kind of supply that should be created, or is this simply, “Get out of the way and let it happen”?

Mr. Tony Irwin: We are private market builders of rental homes. That's what our members do. I think they have a good barometer of what's being demanded in the marketplace. They want to be able to do what they do, and that's build.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: In my riding, I've met with a number of developers, and what they've said to me is that it takes them about 12 years right now, from the time they buy the property until they can build an apartment complex on it. Is that similar to what you're seeing from other members?

Mr. Tony Irwin: That's a very high number. I hear that numbers of five to eight years in the city of Toronto are very common. Elsewhere in the province, obviously it's different. When we speak to our members, they say, “This is great news because it builds confidence.” It brings a level of confidence back for those who want to invest and those who want to build that was absent before. It doesn't change the fact, though, as you point out, sir, that even with this action taken by the provincial government—it doesn't change the municipal barriers and obstacles that still remain.

We are hopeful that through the public consultation that's ongoing now, we'll be able to address some of those concerns. Whether it be the planning process, getting projects approved, the fact that rules can change numerous times during the lifespan of one application—those are all serious issues. People say to me, “How quickly are we going to see buildings built?” The answer is, “It depends.” The other part of the answer is that it will take some time because of the challenges we currently face at the municipal level of government that we hope can be rectified going forward.

Mr. Dave Smith: So if it's five years at the minimum on your end and upwards of 12 years in the area that I live in, would it be fair to say that those additional costs then get passed on to the tenants when the apartment building actually does open up, and if that's the case, are there things that the government should be doing to help reduce those initial costs because, in the long term, it will reduce the overall rent for everyone?

Mr. Tony Irwin: There are certainly several facets to that question. The first answer to, "Do charges get passed on?": Yes, but I think what we've been seeing in more recent years is that projects have not even been built as apartments. They've been built as condominiums because, if the economics don't work for a multi-residential apartment building, they may well—and to those who say that nothing has been built over the last 20 years, well, I think lots of condos have been built, and that's because many builders have said, "Economics don't work for apartments; we're going to build condos instead."

In terms of the second part of your question, whether it be looking at development charges, whether it be looking at taxation that's different for apartment buildings versus single-family homes—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Tony Irwin:—there is a host of issues that need to be looked at that will definitely incent builders to actually build more multi-residential apartment buildings.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: Mr. Irwin, I've been a real estate lawyer for over 20 years, as you may know, so thank you for coming today. I look forward to many discussions over the next several months on ways that we can encourage building for new units for people of all economic levels. So, thank you.

Mr. Tony Irwin: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further comments from the government side? Okay. We'll move to the opposition side. You have five minutes for questioning, Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you for your presentation. This bill also cancels the \$100-million Development Charges Rebate Program. Would you say whether you think that move is likely to encourage or discourage purpose-built rental housing?

Mr. Tony Irwin: I think the exemption is much more encouraging to the sector to build than the removal of the credit, the DC rebate program.

Mr. Ian Arthur: But specifically to the question, do you think that removing the program encourages or discourages purpose-built rental units?

Mr. Tony Irwin: I think the overall announcement encourages the development of more building. We have to look at the whole picture of what was announced, not just one piece of it. Removing the exemption is the part that matters. The development rebate program: While that's a loss, what was done instead far outweighs and is far more positive to incenting builders to build. That's the part that's important.

1550

Mr. Ian Arthur: With the removal of those supports, then, do you believe that the unfettered market alone can supply the affordable housing that is needed across Ontario?

Mr. Tony Irwin: No. Just like I don't think there's one single solution to this problem, there is no single source. There is no single provider. We are part of this mix, whether it be the co-op housing federation—they're part of the mix. Governments certainly have a role to play—

Mr. Ian Arthur: So, then you would say that the governments have a role to play in providing affordable housing for Ontario.

Mr. Tony Irwin: I would say governments have a role to play in solving the housing crisis that currently exists today.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay. Thank you. That's all.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any other questions? No? Okay, thank you for your time.

Mr. Tony Irwin: Thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We appreciate it.

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I would now like to move to our next witness, which is the Canadian Environmental Law Association. If you could just state your names for the record, and you can proceed.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: Thank you very much. We're pleased to be able to appear before you today. My name is Theresa McClenaghan, executive director with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. With me is Richard Lindgren, a counsel with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. We're presenting today on behalf of three organizations: our own, as well as Friends of the Porcupine River Watershed and Ontario Nature, which both specifically reached out to us to ask if we could include them in our presentation today.

We've provided a short submission and a legal analysis. I'll provide an introduction, and then my colleague Mr. Lindgren will provide a summary of the legal analysis.

With respect to Friends of the Porcupine River Watershed, they are a Timmins-area NGO that works on stewardship and improvement of the Porcupine River watershed, specifically dealing with raw sewage overflows and other efforts to improve the watershed.

Ontario Nature is, since 1931, protecting wild spaces and wild species, with 30,000 members and with over 150 organizations.

CELA has been doing our work using law to protect the environment and advocating environmental law reform since 1970.

For reasons Mr. Lindgren will outline, we request that the committee recommend deletion of schedule 15 to Bill 57.

Attached to the material we provided are also three letters, one of which was provided to the Premier by 25

organizations on the day the bill was introduced and has since been endorsed, as of this morning, by 4,043 other Ontarians. We'll be mailing a subsequent copy of that to the Premier later this week.

Ontario Nature circulated a similar letter. As I said in the written remarks, 4,012 Ontarians endorsed it as of last night, but it continues to grow; it's 4,064 now. They also have a letter from 57 nature and conservation organizations also attached to the material. These individuals and organizations represent communities all across Ontario, from the southwest to the northeast, from the Far North to the south.

There is a huge expression of concern by communities about the loss of independence of the commissioner. I will ask Mr. Lindgren to expand on the reasons for our concern.

Mr. Richard Lindgren: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for this opportunity to speak to Bill 57. I'm a staff lawyer at the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

A number of years ago, I was appointed to the environment minister's task force on the Environmental Bill of Rights. That was an advisory committee consisting of representatives from the government, industry and the environmental sector. In short, we helped write and consult upon the Environmental Bill of Rights, including the provisions that establish and empower the Environmental Commissioner.

At that time, Ontario already had the Office of the Auditor General, which was and still is focused on financial accountability. But the task force agreed that it was necessary for Ontario to take extra legislative steps to ensure environmental accountability across the province. That's why we created the Office of the Environmental Commissioner. We made the Environmental Commissioner an independent officer of the Legislature, not the party in power. We gave the Environmental Commissioner a lengthy list of specific monitoring, reporting and public education functions. Those provisions were built into the Environmental Bill of Rights that was passed in 1993 in this province, with all-party support.

However, the government has now introduced Bill 57, and as you know, schedule 15 proposes to abolish the current Environmental Commissioner under the Environmental Bill of Rights. In response to that proposal, I've prepared a detailed, 17-page legal analysis of that schedule.

I'm not going to go through 17 pages in one minute. I just want to indicate that in our respectful submission, the bill makes a number of unacceptable and unjustified changes to the role and function of the Environmental Commissioner and does not fully transfer those existing duties and provisions to the new commissioner of the environment who will be reporting to the Auditor General, not the Legislature.

If enacted, Mr. Chair, it's our view that schedule 15 will result in far less oversight, far less transparency and far less environmental accountability in this province. That's

why we're asking the Ontario government to withdraw schedule 15 from Bill 57.

If there are any questions from the committee, those are our submissions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start the questioning with the opposition side. Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much for your presentation. I appreciate it very much.

Would ordinary people have the same legal tools under this new system as they did with the Environmental Commissioner enforcing the Environmental Bill of Rights?

Mr. Richard Lindgren: No, they won't. I heard Ms. Skelly from the government pose a question, something to the effect of, "Well, isn't it true that even if we don't have the independent Environmental Commissioner anymore, won't people still have a voice? Can't they contact the MPP? Can't they go to the government offices for recourse if environmental problems occur?" The short answer is, yes, they can still do it, but without the independent oversight and accountability provided by the Environmental Commissioner, that's going to be problematic. It's problematic because ordinary people don't have the powers that the Environmental Commissioner has under the Environmental Bill of Rights. The Environmental Commissioner has the powers of a commission under the Public Inquiries Act, so the Environmental Commissioner can compel disclosure of documents, can examine government people on those documents and can do a lot of things, and then is compelled to report on whether and to what extent the government has co-operated with the Environmental Commissioner's investigations. Those important tools will be lost because they're not replicated in schedule 15. That's why I think it's erroneous to conclude that with the loss of the Environmental Commissioner, there will be no real difference in people's voices in terms of environmental issues. That's just not the case at all.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Are you aware of any funding changes to the Ombudsman's office that would correlate with this being—sorry, the Auditor General, in this case—that would correlate to this to ensure that there were resources there?

Mr. Richard Lindgren: Well, I have not seen any number crunching that would suggest that this is going to result in any net savings that will meaningfully address this multi-billion-dollar deficit that we're apparently in in this province. As I understand it, most or all of the existing ECO staff and their office computers and office chairs will be moved sideways to the Auditor General's Office. If that's the case, what's the real savings?

That's why I hearken back to the point made by Ms. Schwartzel in her remarks to the committee earlier today. If we're not saving any real money, what's the justification for the bill? Why is it going to happen?

Well, I read between the lines and I suggest that this a deliberate attempt to reduce public trust and reduce public oversight in the environmental decision-making, standard-setting and permit-issuing of this province.

Mr. Ian Arthur: The previous Environmental Commissioner was obligated to provide three reports a year, and then a series of special reports, should they so choose. The most recent report flagged the end of the water source protection framework, the funding for that, which, if it was pulled away—you can see the path to a repeat of Walkerton. That's just one of the issues flagged. The report, overall, was quite critical of the steps that the previous government had taken with regard to environmental protection that this government was going to take.

Do you think that by moving it under the Auditor General and taking away some of their teeth, there's an attempt to silence this reporting ability?

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: The Environmental Commissioner, Ms. Saxe, released a report two days before this bill was introduced. She called it "Back to Basics." She was quite concerned about a history of lack of enforcement about basic water protection and air protection—concerns which we share. The Friends of the Porcupine River Watershed were highlighted in her report two days before this bill was introduced, specifically around issues to do, for example, with the discharge of raw sewage into Porcupine Lake. She noted in her report—the commissioner did—that the ministry has been tolerating combined sewer overflows that breach the relevant legislation.

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The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: The Friends of the Porcupine River Watershed were quite dismayed because they had received help from the commissioner's office about addressing that problem. The concern is that that kind of ability to seek independent, non-partisan, non-governmental help but to demand a response from the government is critical to her role. It's that independent, impartial role that's critical.

Mr. Ian Arthur: And then, because technically now the Environmental Commissioner is an employee of the Auditor General, I understand you think that could potentially limit the independence of their reports quite quickly.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: She would no longer be independent, and she would be doing her work subject to the direction of the Auditor General. It's explicitly what it says in the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll now move to questioning on the government side: Mr. Downey?

Mr. Doug Downey: I guess I'll start. I don't know if you had a chance to follow the Auditor General's experience with the previous government's Fair Hydro Act. Did you follow that saga?

Mr. Richard Lindgren: Well, I read what I read in the newspaper.

Mr. Doug Downey: Do you have any sense that the Auditor General isn't independent?

Mr. Richard Lindgren: The Auditor General is independent, but she has an entirely different function than

what the Environmental Commissioner does under the EBR. It's apples and oranges.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: There is a further concern under this bill in a number of schedules that we haven't highlighted which have to do with the ability to remove any of the independent officers of the Legislature for grounds that the government of the day or the Legislative Assembly steering committee of the day would see fit. That raises a serious concern about whether all of the independent officers of the Legislature will feel emboldened to speak out when they have to criticize the government for any matter across the range of the functions that they deal with. The status of the Auditor General, if this bill is passed as is, will no longer be quite the same in terms of independence: independent in name, but subject to the amendments that are included in other schedules to this bill.

Mr. Doug Downey: But the supposition or the proposition that you're making is that somehow this government will tell the Auditor General how to run her office.

Mr. Richard Lindgren: Well, I've had occasion to read the Auditor General Act, and I'm sure you have as well. If you look through it, you'll see that she has got a very discrete set of financial-focused duties, so yes, she's independent, but she's looking at different things. The word "environment" doesn't even appear in the Auditor General Act. That's why I say to you, with great respect, that this is an apples-and-oranges comparison. The Environmental Commissioner exists to do one job and one job only, which is to hold the government accountable for its environmental performance. That's not something that has been done by the Auditor General to date.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm just dealing with, because you've said it several times, concerns about independence, the ability to compel disclosure, far less oversight—and you called into question whether we even have a multi-billion-dollar deficit, which I can assure you is real.

I'm just trying to deal with that independence piece. You're not suggesting—I heard you just say—that the Auditor General is anything but independent—

Mr. Richard Lindgren: She's independent, but doing something different. That's the essential point. That's the critical point.

The other point I would make is that I think there has been some suggestion that this newly appointed commissioner of the environment is somehow going to be the legislative equivalent to the Environmental Commissioner right now under the EBR. That's not true either, because that person will only be an employee of the Auditor General, subject to whatever discretion or direction the Auditor General cares to put upon that office from time to time. That's the concern about a loss of independence.

Mr. Doug Downey: But we're now not talking about the government manhandling that; you're talking about what the Auditor General will let the commissioner do.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: We're talking about a bill which proposes to remove the independent Environmental Commissioner as an office of the Legislature. That will no

longer exist. Even with the ability to hire an employee as a commissioner under the current bill and for the Auditor General to give that employee direction, that person who becomes the commissioner will have to seek direction from someone else and have to undertake inquiries scoped by someone else, subject to a budget decided by someone else. Right now, those functions are carried out by an independent officer who reports directly to all of you in the Legislature on a non-partisan basis.

Mr. Doug Downey: And those decisions will be made by an independent officer who reports to the Legislature.

Mr. Richard Lindgren: On non-environmental issues.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: Yes. The financial accountability, while important—and we've seen reports dealing with subject matter on the environment on the financial side, like source water protection—very important. But that's a different function than the environmental oversight.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute. Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: I just wanted to touch on a comment you made earlier with respect to independent officers and governments of the day having the ability to increase/remove—so just to clarify, you support governments of the day increasing the number of independent officers, but not governments of the day decreasing the number of independent officers that we have.

Mr. Richard Lindgren: I don't think we took a position. I think we're looking squarely at the issue—

Mr. David Piccini: No, this is to your colleague.

Mr. Richard Lindgren: I'll start and she can finish. I think what we said was that we have an independent officer called the Environmental Commissioner, and she needs to stay intact under the Environmental Bill of Rights.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: Right. I absolutely agree with that. What I'm talking about is the issue about whether or not the independent officers would be suspended when the assembly or, in the absence of the assembly, the board of the assembly, is of the opinion that the suspension is warranted.

This would be a new provision that's being included for all of the independent accountability officers—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. I have to cut you off. Thank you for your testimony.

TTC RIDERS

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll now move to the TTC Riders. Good afternoon. If you could just introduce yourself for the record, and then you can start into your presentation.

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: Good afternoon. My name is Shelagh Pizey-Allen. I'm the executive director of TTC Riders. Thanks for having me here today, to the Chair and committee.

TTC Riders is a membership-based organization of transit riders. We have hundreds of dues-paying members and over 10,000 supporters. I'm here today to speak to

schedule 25 of Bill 57, which amends the Metrolinx Act, 2006. We find that schedule 25 is not in the best interests of transit riders and taxpayers in our region for three key reasons:

(1) The amendments make Metrolinx even less transparent and accountable to us.

(2) The act takes away local input from towns and cities, which paves the way for two-tier transit and privatization.

(3) Metrolinx's mandate to reduce greenhouse gases and smog has disappeared from the act.

Just over a year ago, a Metrolinx scandal came to light when the Toronto Star reported that the Ministry of Transportation, under Steven del Duca, had pressured the Metrolinx board to approve two GO stations that had not been recommended because they would actually reduce ridership. Two days from now, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk will release her findings about whether these stations are, in fact, worth building.

I'm certain that this government does not want to go down the path of the previous one. It is time to end backroom deal-making and secrecy about Metrolinx's transit plans. But the amendments to the Metrolinx Act in Bill 57, schedule 25, will make provincial transit planning even less transparent and accountable. That's because schedule 25 concentrates power in the hands of the minister and removes Metrolinx's duty to consult with the public, with municipalities, with the federal government and with First Nations.

When Metrolinx develops or amends its regional transportation plan, according to these amendments the minister will get to decide who gets consulted and who doesn't. That's not accountable or transparent. Whether it's the Minister of Transportation, developers, transit experts or political parties, nobody should be making transit decisions behind closed doors.

Transit riders and taxpayers need to have a voice in transit decision-making. Metrolinx doesn't allow the public to come and make a deputation to its board like I'm doing here today, but Bill 57 does not fix this. That's why TTC Riders is recommending that Bill 57 be amended to make all portions of the Metrolinx board meetings open to the public, with public deputations permitted.

One of the most troubling aspects of the amendments to the Metrolinx Act is that our municipalities will have less say at a time when this provincial government is aiming to take control of local transit in a way that it hasn't before. The province is planning to steal away transit assets that Toronto residents have paid for through our transit fares and through our property taxes, but we still don't know if this government intends to take on the TTC's liabilities, including its capital-repair backlog, its debt and accessibility upgrades. We still don't know which TTC assets the province intends to take over, and we don't know whether other municipalities are next.

What we do know is that Metrolinx is planning to charge us more to ride rapid transit and travel longer distances. That puts us on a path towards a two-tier transit system, where we pay premium fares for the subway and

everyone else gets crammed onto overcrowded buses. That's really why we need more say for transit riders and for municipalities at Metrolinx, not less, which is what these amendments accomplish. We're further recommending that this bill restore municipal and regional representatives with decision-making power to the Metrolinx board.

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Transit connects our communities. Millions of us depend on it to get to school and to work, so we really need a voice at the table and a fairly funded transit system. As you know, the TTC is the least-subsidized major transit system in Canada and the US.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: We know that transit privatization and public-private partnerships have been a disaster all around the world. The Presto system right here at home is a prime example that I know that this government has been concerned with. We know that privatization and the breakup of our transit system will lead to higher fares, less say for riders and worse service. The Auditor General of Ontario has documented that public-private partnerships actually increase cost to the taxpayer.

I would encourage the members of this committee to carefully consider this bill and the consequences that a two-tier transit system would have for our region.

I just want to conclude by reiterating our four recommendations. You have them in front of you, with more references and a more fulsome version attached.

Our four recommendations to restore trust and transparency and accountability to Metrolinx are:

—to make all portions of the Metrolinx board meetings open to the public, with public deputations permitted;

—restore municipal and regional representatives with decision-making power to the Metrolinx board—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. I apologize that I have to cut you off, but we've got a really strict schedule.

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: That's all right. You have it in front of you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll now go to the government side for questions. Mr. Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: You mention the P3s. I brought this up in with another deputation earlier today, and we didn't have a chance to answer it. He talked about how private-public partnerships don't work; they just add to the cost to it—and that the Mimico station that we're talking about doing right now is a prime example of where it doesn't work.

The Manulife Centre here in Toronto has a subway station right below it. Are you objecting to that? Does it not work?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: What I was referring to was the Auditor General of Ontario's annual report in 2014, which found that P3s cost taxpayers more. They cost taxpayers in Toronto up to \$8 billion more—

Mr. Dave Smith: Does the Manulife Centre subway stop not work?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: I'm not sure—

Mr. Dave Smith: Do people not use it, or are people not able to get onto it? Do they not go to the Manulife Centre and actually do things there?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: I think what you might be referring to is, is transit-oriented development good for transit? Certainly it is, but the model has a really big impact on whether the public gets a say and whether transit is properly funded.

My key point here is that these changes to the Metrolinx Act concentrate power in the hands of the minister and they don't give transit riders, the public or municipalities a voice in decisions that affect them. It opens the door to privatization of the TTC. Breaking apart our transit system will not make transit more affordable. It will not deliver better transit. Only fair funding for our transit system will accomplish that.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thanks very much for coming in today. I appreciate it.

I just want to try to have a bit of a dialogue taken out. I appreciate your recommendations.

Just to take a step back: We ran on a platform during the election of making uploads. I had a lot of people write to me, saying, "Hey, previous governments of the day have downloaded a lot of this, and it made it life difficult." Now we upload and—now we can't upload. So I'm just trying to find some common ground here.

Just on the discourse: I'm from rural Ontario, and I take the TTC down as an elected member. I came out the other day, and someone said that Doug Ford is stealing the TTC. I just thought the rhetoric around that—if you agree that that actually doesn't encourage and facilitate proper discourse and it only increases the polarization of the debate that we want to have on this issue. It just hit me when I came out the other day.

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: I would say, I think that "upload" is a bit of a misnomer when it comes to what this government is actually proposing. First of all, it started with subways. That's what's in the Plan for the People. But now that the terms of reference have come forward, we've seen that that has expanded to include other TTC assets, and we don't yet know what that is.

This government is not proposing uploading responsibility for operating the subways. That would be a true upload. What the government is proposing is taking assets that taxpayers and Toronto transit riders have paid for and not compensating the city of Toronto, not paying to operate those subway lines. So I think "upload" is not the correct term.

Mr. David Piccini: I appreciate that intervention. But do you agree that the dialogue I referenced is unhelpful?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: I think that transit riders are very upset that this government is taking away an asset that they've paid for.

Mr. David Piccini: When we spoke to a lot of people at the doors—and I know my Toronto colleagues will talk about the cost. The Arcadis Sustainable Cities Mobility Index was on blogTO. It was shared by some of your

readers, when I looked, and just concerned transit riders. We ranked a lowly 86 with respect to economic efficiencies.

Do you agree with the government's intent to try and expand and have a more efficient transit system that's affordable for the taxpayers? Do you agree with that sort of objective?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: Absolutely. We support an affordable, world-class public transit system. But what we haven't seen is how this will actually benefit transit riders in the region and in Toronto, because it's taking an asset that we paid for and it's not putting any money back into the system to operate it. That's why we're saying that the amendments to this act aren't in the best interests of transit riders or taxpayers.

Mr. David Piccini: Given the economic realities that we're in, as officials elected by the people of Ontario on this platform, as being the stewards of the public purse, do you understand us wanting to really take an active role in being that responsible steward of the public purse?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: Absolutely, and I think that municipalities also have a key role to play, because all of these transit decisions affect them—not just Toronto, but municipalities all throughout the GTHA. We know that this Metrolinx Act amendment is expanding the purview of Metrolinx. It's important that those municipalities which engage in transit planning have a voice at the table.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll now go to questions from the opposition side for five minutes. Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your presentation. At the end there, you wanted to reiterate four key points. Would you just elaborate on those again?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: Sure, I could restate them. TTC Riders feels that to truly restore accountability and transparency to Metrolinx, Bill 57 must include the following amendments:

- that all portions of all Metrolinx board meetings be open to the public, with public deputations permitted;

- that we restore municipal and regional representatives with decision-making power to the Metrolinx board;

- that we do not repeal Metrolinx's requirements to consult the public, planning authorities, municipalities, provincial and federal agencies and ministers, and First Nations; and

- that this act does not repeal Metrolinx's objective to reduce greenhouse gases and smog.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Perfect. Thank you so much. You spoke a little bit about how the operational costs were not being uploaded, and that it's unclear whether the liabilities will be assumed by the province. To me, that sounds like the government is picking and choosing areas of responsibility, limiting the potential liabilities.

Then you stated that this could lead to future increases in costs for ridership, and a two-tiered system which would, in effect, take money out of the pockets of Ontarians who have actually already paid for this service once and will end up paying a second time. Would that be an accurate statement?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: Yes. Metrolinx has been clear that they intend to introduce a system of fare integration that would see transit riders paying a premium for fast transit, like the subway, and that they would like to charge us more to ride further distances.

Right now, the TTC is an integrated network. We pay one fare for one system to transfer between bus and subway, and we don't want to pay an extra fare to get on the subway. That's what is at stake here.

Transit experts have pointed out that the costs that this government is proposing in terms of capital costs for the subway are woefully inadequate. They do not come close to the liabilities that the subway asset has in terms of capital repair backlog, accessibility upgrades and so on.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That backlog and all of those costs: How would those be paid for if the government isn't assuming responsibility for that?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: That's a question that has yet to be answered by the government. That's why it's such a concern. What happens if there is a disagreement about what accessibility upgrades or what capital repairs need to be made? Who's responsible for that?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Okay. If there isn't clear responsibility, what do you see for future liabilities in terms of, say, health and safety, if that ever became an issue?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: Track maintenance and signal upgrades on, for example, the Bloor-Yonge line: We know that there's a lack of funding for that. Repairs such as these, accessibility upgrades: That's all part of a package of capital costs, and it's unclear whether the government is taking responsibility for that.

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The word "upload" is a misnomer, really. It's taking a valuable asset—it has expanded from just subways to become an open question of TTC assets that has not yet been defined, but responsibility for paying for it and paying for the operating costs of any new subway extensions has not been answered.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any further questions? Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. I'm sorry I'm late to hear your testimony. Hopefully you have not already been asked this question. Can you talk about the kinds of consultations that you were part of before this bill was put out, and the significant changes?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: I haven't been aware of any consultation about this bill.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So not with your group. Were there any consultations in the community at all that you're aware of?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: Not that I'm aware of.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Do you think there should have been some, or can you talk about what you think would be an appropriate level of consultation for changes that are this significant to a public transit system?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: The Metrolinx Act affects millions and millions of commuters in the GTHA. It is

vital that members of the public, transit riders and municipalities have a voice at the Metrolinx table and also are consulted about any changes to it. That's why we're recommending that Metrolinx become more transparent and accountable and have elected officials on its board and that its meetings be open to the public and have public deputations at them.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: In however many seconds I have left, are there any final words that you would like to leave with us?

Ms. Shelagh Pizey-Allen: I think we all understand that Metrolinx has been plagued by secrecy. We still don't know how much it costs, the subsidy that taxpayers are paying for the Union Pearson Express. This act does not remedy those issues of secrecy. We shouldn't be making transit plans in the backroom, but this act doesn't fix it. I'd urge you to take a close look at the schedule 25 amendments to the Metrolinx Act.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much.

FEDERATION OF METRO TENANTS' ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'll call up the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations. If you could just state your name for the record and begin your presentation, please.

Mr. Geordie Dent: My name is Geordie Dent. I'm the executive director of the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, which gives me a nice little segue into what the tenant federation is and does. We're a non-profit tenants' rights organization. We've been around for over 40 years. We're the oldest and largest tenant federation in Canada. We do direct service to about 80,000 tenants a year; about 40,000 of those are face-to-face or on the phone, and another 40,000 on our website.

We're speaking today to recommend against the repeal of rent control in the omnibus bill. In our opinion, it protects millions of tenants in the province from illegal evictions, illegal contracts and horrendous rent increases.

We don't think that repealing rent control on new units is going to result in any new units being built. Instead, it's going to simply increase misery and suffering for tenants who are going to face rent increases just for asking for the stove to be repaired or telling the superintendent not to come in when they're in the shower.

We have six comments on why you shouldn't repeal rent control and four comments on what you should do instead.

Why you shouldn't repeal: I've got a little compendium package that I'm going to be walking through here. Mainly, the government said they wouldn't; they promised the status quo in terms of rent control, and we think they should keep that.

Reason number 2 why we think you should not repeal rent control is because not doing so is a Progressive Conservative idea. In 2011 there was a private member's bill by a Conservative MPP saying that we shouldn't have

an exemption for rent control. Subsequent bills came out from the NDP and the Liberals, and when it finally came in front of the Legislature last year, there was unanimous support.

Reason number 3: Exempting rent control from new units does not and did not increase the development of rental units. Here's the evidence. That line bottoming out right at the bottom is how many units were built when there was no rent control: almost nothing. In fact, I've looked into this for years. There's not a single example anyone can give me of cutting rent control leading to more units or bringing it in leading to fewer units. It just doesn't exist in the academic literature.

The best case for that is point number 4: Expanding rent control protection did not stop a surge in rental housing development this year. There's a great press release in here from Urbanation. What they found is that after expanded rent control, nearly three and a half times greater the number of proposed rental units came in. Again, there was almost no effect on rent control; in fact, the opposite. It surged after rent control was expanded.

Another point that I think is important: The government recently released a consultation on building housing, and I think the third point in it is that landlords are really hurting in Ontario right now, and that's just almost nonsensical. I've got a couple of things in here: Rental income is the highest it has been ever recorded, right now in the city of Toronto. It's the strongest rental growth landlords have seen in 30 years.

If you look at any publicly traded landlord company, they are soaking in profits, and that's mostly coming from Ontario and BC.

Tenants, on the other hand, are getting absolutely smashed right now. It is really bad out there for any tenant, and there's a number of examples that I've gotten here of tenants getting just massive rent increases for nothing: for asking for repairs; because the landlord wants to clear out the building because they want to sell it. These are what we call economic evictions. They're really bad. Tenants don't need them; tenants don't need to be in instability.

That's one of the last little things I have in here: the polls. Tenants predominantly support expanded rent control.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Geordie Dent: What you should do instead is keep your word: maintain the status quo; follow your own party's recommendations. There's this interim report that came out in 2001 from the Progressive Conservatives and what it said was, there is some need for some government role in assisting low-income households.

The things that do build rental housing are often government subsidies. That's been cut. Development charges rebate and social housing funding could actually help build some units, so you might want to bring that back.

Look to Quebec. Quebec has the strongest vacancy rent control in Canada. There's a great little article in here that apparently it's going through a rental renaissance. Even though they've got strong rent control, people are building

lots of units. So you should do what they do. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We'll start questioning from the opposition for five minutes. Ms. Morrison.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Geordie. I have a few questions. You've spoken to that cutting rent control won't increase the supply of affordable housing in Ontario—if you could elaborate on what you think would increase the supply of affordable housing.

Mr. Geordie Dent: There's an expert in the field named David Hulchanski. I know he has come to this committee a number of times to talk about rent control, and what he said recently is that the reason why we stopped building rental units is because the federal government stopped subsidizing them.

There is a variety of subsidies that can work at the municipal, provincial and federal levels that we think will build units. I could speak at length about this, but again, the development charges rebate I know was one that's been raised that could help do that. There is a variety of other things around property taxes. In fact, we believe that the decision to freeze property taxes on rental in 2016 actually caused this spike that you're seeing in rental development.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Okay. Were you or your organization consulted at all prior to the introduction of Bill 57?

Mr. Geordie Dent: No. We haven't been contacted by the Minister of Housing's office at all.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Okay. Knowing that you work closely with tenants and tenant groups, could you maybe share a little bit about what you're hearing on the ground about how this will affect tenants?

Mr. Geordie Dent: Yes. I can't do it justice. I urge you all—any of you who wants to come down to our office and sit in and watch our staff on our tenant hotline. It's a nightmare out there right now. It's really rough. We deal daily with people just bawling on the phone because they can't afford the rent. They've gotten an illegal eviction notice and they're being pushed out of their community for 10 years to 15 years. They can't get repairs done. There are little babies covered in bedbug bites, and people don't want to live there. They'd like to move to better conditions and better housing, but it's not out there. People who are moving right now are facing just massive rent increases and very low choice.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: If you don't mind, I just want to take you back to this chart which was provided by CMHC. This is my understanding historically, that when rent controls are put in place, the idea that this would increase housing is just not supported by the data.

Mr. Geordie Dent: The idea is the opposite, that if you put in rent control, housing development goes down. You'll see at the very bottom there, there's this massive amount when you start in the early 1990s. That was mostly due to federal programs, which were cut in 1992. So yes, rent control was then exempted and nothing got built.

Again, the data is really clear and the data bears this out in a bunch of different areas: Israel in 1953, Boston in the 1980s. When you cut rent control, you don't get any more units from it.

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Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just want to put on the record that this data comes from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., so this is significant third-party data. This is not partisan data—

Mr. Geordie Dent: There is no housing advocate I know out there who says that cutting rent control is going to build more units. You hear a lot from the real estate and development industry, but I don't know a single person who actually advocates for tenants who would argue that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You've talked about some of the impacts this will have on people in the community. You also said that you have not been consulted; your group had not been consulted. We're hearing that from most of the deputants, that there has been no consultation on this bill.

My question to you, without having been consulted: Would you like to put forward a reason why you think this government is doing this in this bill? What would be their rationale for this?

Mr. Geordie Dent: I have no idea. All I know is, they said they weren't. Again, there is a variety of reasons why they could have changed their mind. I don't know what it is. You'd have to ask them.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, thank you. How much time, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): You've got a minute and a half.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I know that you didn't quite get a chance to finish your deputation. In the last few minutes we have left, do you want to finish, or are there other things that you want to leave us with? We've got a minute and a half.

Mr. Geordie Dent: Look, I did manage to get through the main points. I appreciate the extra time to do that, but no, all my points are made. I think this is crystal clear. This is going to help landlord profits. This is going to help a landlord who wants to kick somebody out who's asking for maintenance. This is going to help a landlord who's like, "Oh, you know what? If I didn't have this tenant in there, I could be making a bit more money." That's all this is going to help, and I think the data very clearly bears that out.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Arthur, less than one minute.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just one final point: Do you think that this legislation will make the affordable housing crisis in Ontario worse?

Mr. Geordie Dent: Yes, absolutely. You know what? It already has. When this was announced, we got a flood of calls and emails. Facebook lit up. It's bad out there. People are terrified.

Honestly, I wish I could tell them what the bill actually means. Reading it, the language has created a lot of confusion. There are people who think any lease entered

into after a certain date is not going to have any rent control. Reading it, I can't tell them definitively that that's not how it's going to play out in terms of the legislation.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. We'll now move to the government side for five minutes of questioning. Mr. Downey.

Mr. Doug Downey: I just wanted to get an understanding of your premise. You're saying that if you remove rent control, it has no effect on the building market.

Mr. Geordie Dent: That's not really my premise; that's the data. Again, you can take a look at the data in there. Rent control was removed in 1997; nothing got built as a result. That's Ontario, at least.

Mr. Doug Downey: We do agree that there's a shortage.

Mr. Geordie Dent: Absolutely.

Mr. Doug Downey: So your four solutions, if I understand them—and I'm sure you'll correct me—are: (1) maintain rent control, which has no effect on building, and we've established that from your perspective; (2) government should spend more money assisting; (3) government should spend more money assisting; and (4) maintain rent control. I mean, that's what I'm getting from these four points.

Mr. Geordie Dent: Sorry, I can outline this. Yes, maintain rent control to help current tenants; bring in the programs that will help build more housing; the other one is a couple of specific programs that will build more housing—correct; and the fourth one is Quebec. Quebec is probably more of a combination of the two. I believe they spend more money on rental housing development and they've got stronger rent control. So yes, do what the Conservative Party interim committee recommended in 2001. You're going to have to spend some money, absolutely, and strengthen rent control. Those are our recommendations.

Mr. Doug Downey: Those were the only questions I had. If there are any others?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any other questions? Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Yes, sure. A couple of things: I too have done a lot of reading into some research in here, and one of the things that had come out of the data was that once rent control was introduced in Toronto, rents increased by 15% and continued to go up. Are we seeing a challenge here in that rent control is causing lower supply and thus higher aggregate prices?

Mr. Geordie Dent: First of all, rents didn't start going up after rent control was expanded. That's been happening pretty much since I've been on the job, since at least 2009.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: But there was a jump of 15% when rent controls—

Mr. Geordie Dent: Again, there have probably been jumps similar to that in other years. Check the data, but it's gone up.

Interjection.

Mr. Geordie Dent: That's the data for the year. What were the jumps in previous years?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'd have to go back and look. That was one of the most significant jumps.

Mr. Geordie Dent: I think if you're looking at data, in terms of the units built, here it is: A bunch got built after rent control got expanded, three and a half times more than before rent control was expanded. This wasn't because of rent control. We often argue that rent control has almost no effect on this. This is likely due to a freezing of multi-residential property tax rates in 2016.

But I've talked to some other developers. They think it was just a change in the retail landscape. Either way, almost none of them said this had anything to do with rent control.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Sure. We both agree, though, that a lack of supply is certainly a big part of this problem.

Mr. Geordie Dent: Absolutely.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Okay. Who should be mainly responsible for adding more supply into the market?

Mr. Geordie Dent: It's really up to the people in power. There's a role for everyone. There is a variety of things that can be done at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: So government should be responsible for increasing supply. It's not private builders who should be going into the market and building more units?

Mr. Geordie Dent: I don't understand.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Well, a lack of supply means that there aren't enough units out there, right? These need to be built by someone. Are you saying government should be building them all?

Mr. Geordie Dent: In the 1940s, the mayor of Toronto sent out an advertisement to all papers in the region, saying, "Don't move here. Housing shortage." That's one way of dealing with it.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: So government should be building—

Mr. Geordie Dent: What then came out was a variety of CMHC programs that built most of the rental housing stock that we've seen. To the best of my knowledge, the only source of affordable rental that's happened in Canada has come from government subsidy.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I've spoken to a number of poverty associations in Ottawa. I recently met with some representatives from the Ottawa Mission who basically told me that they think the government has done an abysmal job with affordable housing. In fact, they feel that so strongly that they have now gotten into the business themselves and they've built an affordable housing unit in Ottawa that they are running and managing that is profitable for their organization. If it's profitable for the Ottawa Mission to do that, don't you think that there definitely is opportunity for the private sector to move in here? If there's a profit, does it not simply follow that they will get involved in that market?

Mr. Geordie Dent: Sorry. I'm sort of bouncing around here, but I think this graph answers that for you.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: So in other words, you're just saying businesses—they see an opportunity for profit and they're not going to go after it.

Mr. Geordie Dent: They didn't. There's no rental control on these buildings, sir.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony. We'll have to move on. Thank you.

ASSEMBLÉE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE DE L'ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We will move on to the next organization: l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. If any of you needs translation services, there's a microphone attached here.

Again, if you could introduce yourselves for the record and then you can begin your testimony.

Mr. Peter Hominuk: Hello. My name is Peter Hominuk. I am the executive director, le directeur général de l'Assemblée de la francophonie.

M. Carol Jolin: Bonjour. Je m'appelle Carol Jolin. Je suis le président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie.

Alors, part of my presentation will be in French and part of it will be in English.

Tout d'abord, merci, monsieur le Président et membres du comité. Je vous remercie de m'avoir invité à vous parler dans le cadre de votre étude du projet de loi 57.

L'AFO is very sensitive to Ontario's serious economic challenges. L'AFO understands that the government was elected with a mandate to address Ontario's finances. Today, I will address two elements which will cause irreparable harm to the 1.5 million French-speaking people in Ontario.

Le premier traite de l'abolition du Commissariat aux services en français, dont une partie du mandat, le traitement des plaintes, sera transférée à l'ombudsman. En tout respect du travail de M. Paul Dubé, le transfert des responsabilités du Commissariat aux services en français à l'ombudsman de l'Ontario représente un recul des droits de la minorité francophone.

Transferring the commissioner's team to the Ombudsman is a step backwards because it means losing the commissioner's independence, which all parties voted unanimously for in 2013, including the governing party. The duty to handle complaints remains, but not the commissioner's mandate to promote French-language services to all spheres of the government. This was confirmed by M. Dubé in an interview he granted to Radio-Canada on November 26.

Cette décision ne permet aucune économie, aura un grand impact sur les services en français dans la province et coûtera plus d'argent aux contribuables.

We understand what the government is trying to do. However, there's no economic or policy reason to change the status quo. This will not help you to accomplish your economic goals, and it will cause irreparable harm. We understand you are working very hard and you have much hard work in front of you. We understand that you don't

intend to cause this harm to the francophone community, but now you've been made aware of the impacts, we ask that you respectfully remove schedule 20. This is a minor thing for you, but it is a major thing for us.

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Le deuxième élément problématique est celui du retrait du financement de l'Université de l'Ontario français. Les communautés franco-ontariennes et francophiles ont besoin d'une université franco-ontarienne gérée par et pour les francophones, et ce, dans la région la moins bien desservie en termes d'offre de programmes postsecondaires en français.

As well, the government of Canada's position is clear: It is ready to be a partner with the government of Ontario by funding half of the university's operating costs over the next eight years.

In the past, the government of Canada provided significant funding needed to launch La Cité collégiale and le Collège Boréal. The government of Canada has the programs in place to support a project like the university. The province has to simply submit the project, and the federal government can help fund up to 50%. The province could ask the government to finance their 50% up front for the first few years of the university, so that the province can prepare and find funding for later years—let's say 2022-23, for example.

Let's be clear: By leaving this project behind, the province is leaving millions of federal dollars on the table.

Two days ago, over 15,000 people from Ontario, francophones and anglophones, got together across the province to do two things: (1) to celebrate our pride in our francophone language, culture and heritage, and (2) to reassure the government that these two institutions are essential to our survival and that we need them to protect and promote our language and culture.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Carol Jolin: We wanted to make sure that the Premier would have no doubt that these two institutions need to play the role they need to play.

We ask that you make the necessary changes to the present bill to allow both of those institutions to thrive. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you for the testimony. We'll start with five minutes of questions from the government side. Mr. Roberts.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Merci beaucoup, Carol et Peter, d'être ici aujourd'hui. Je veux juste commencer par dire que je reconnais votre passion, et j'accepte ça. Comme j'ai dit ce matin aux représentants—nous avons eu la chance d'entendre du commissariat ce matin. J'ai dit, moi, je suis Franco-Ontarien aussi, donc je sais que ceci est quelque chose de très important.

Je veux avoir la chance de discuter avec toi le cas commercial pour l'université, parce qu'une des choses pour nous, c'est que nous avons toutes sortes de difficultés maintenant à assurer que notre situation financière ici dans la province est quelque chose qu'on peut battre et retourner à une situation plus bonne, avec nos finances provinciales. Quand une étude de faisabilité a été faite,

nous avons trouvé que maintenant on voit les inscriptions à toutes les universités autour de la province qui diminuent chaque année, donc—

M. Gilles Bisson: Pas à l'Université de Hearst. Ça augmente.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Diminuent.

M. Gilles Bisson: À l'Université de Hearst, ça augmente.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Je vais arriver à l'Université de Hearst.

Donc, avec ces numéros qui diminuent autour de la province, est-ce que c'est un bon temps pour construire une nouvelle université francophone, si les numéros nous disent que cette université ne va pas avoir la chance de survivre pour des années dans l'avenir?

M. Carol Jolin: Je vais répondre. Dans la grande région de Toronto, il y a beaucoup d'immigration et de gens qui déménagent à Toronto. D'ici six ou sept ans—les recherches le prouvent—la plus grande concentration de francophones ne sera plus dans l'Est mais va être dans le grand Toronto. Déjà, on a 40 écoles secondaires dans toute la région. Le nombre d'élèves, si je ne me trompe pas, est dans les—il y a 110 écoles élémentaires et on parle de 100 000 élèves. À travers la province, on a 100 000 élèves dans des écoles de français langue première.

Déjà, il y a beaucoup de progression dans la région de Toronto. Les deux conseils scolaires, catholique et public, ouvrent des nouvelles écoles élémentaires à tous les deux ans et une école secondaire à tous les quatre ou cinq ans. Donc, si dans plusieurs parties de la province c'est en train de diminuer, ici à Toronto c'est en train d'augmenter. Comme on n'a pas d'offre de service véritable pour les jeunes qui terminent leurs études secondaires dans nos écoles francophones, ce qui arrive—ils ne déménagent pas. Ils ne vont pas à Laurentienne à Sudbury. Ils ne viennent pas à Ottawa. Ils vont à l'université anglophone qui est la plus près. Nous les perdons, et ça, ça contribue à l'assimilation—on parle d'une assimilation de 60 % à 70 % des jeunes. De ça, le marché du travail à Toronto nous dit déjà : « Nous avons besoin de main-d'œuvre francophone. » J'ajouterais également que dans la région de Toronto, il y a 150 000 étudiants enregistrés dans les écoles d'immersion, et on enlève également à ses élèves—là la possibilité de continuer au niveau universitaire en français.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Mais les élèves qui vont à une école secondaire francophone ou à un programme d'immersion, ils ne vont pas tous aller à une université francophone.

M. Carol Jolin: On s'entend là-dessus, mais comme il y a tellement peu de programmes dans la région de Toronto, ils n'ont pas d'option. Donc, on veut—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Donc, moi je viens d'Ottawa. À Ottawa nous avons La Cité collégiale. Nous avons aussi une université bilingue, l'Université d'Ottawa. Comme mon collègue d'en avant a dit, nous avons aussi l'Université de Hearst. Est-ce que vous seriez opposé à ce que la programmation en langue française provenant

d'universités comme Hearst soit établie dans le sud ou le centre de l'Ontario, ou peut-être que La Cité offre plus de services à Toronto ou dans le Sud?

M. Carol Jolin: C'est exactement ce que M^{me} Adam voit dans son rapport de planification, qu'il y a des partenariats qui étaient d'ailleurs établis dans quelques cas, des partenariats avec des institutions qui sont déjà installées, et qu'on puisse, justement, avoir une gamme de cours qui réponde aux besoins du marché à Toronto : on parle de l'éducation, on parle du commerce—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We'll now go to questioning from the opposition. Mr. Bourgouin.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci, Carol—monsieur Jolin. Avez-vous été consulté, d'une forme ou d'une autre, pour les compressions qu'ils font au commissaire ou à l'université?

M. Carol Jolin: Non, on n'a jamais été consulté.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je suis au courant que vous avez une grande affiliation de francophones que vous couvrez à travers la province—aucun organisme n'a été consulté?

M. Carol Jolin: Aucun organisme n'a été consulté. Ça a été la surprise la plus totale le jeudi, qu'on a appelé le « jeudi noir ».

M. Guy Bourgouin: Oui, le jeudi noir.

L'autre question que j'aimerais vous demander—j'ai demandé la question au commissaire : pourquoi est-ce que c'est important à la francophonie que le commissaire reste indépendant? Parce que la ministre semble dire que c'est la même chose, j'aimerais vous entendre sur pourquoi vous dites que ce n'est pas la même chose.

M. Carol Jolin: Bien, ce n'est pas la même chose. Quand on nous dit que quelqu'un est « indépendant » puis qu'il est sous quelqu'un, moi, j'ai un problème à comprendre. On parle des deux côtés de la bouche ici. De ça, est-ce que ça veut dire que le commissaire doit se rapporter, que chacun de ses rapports doit être approuvé par l'ombudsman, que chacune des plaintes et chacun des rapports qui sont publiés doivent être approuvés par l'ombudsman? Est-ce que le commissaire doit se rapporter à l'ombudsman quand il part faire une rencontre des ministères pour s'assurer que les ministères sont bien au courant de leurs responsabilités envers la Loi sur les services en français—ou encore, qu'il fasse la promotion de l'offre active? On n'a aucune garantie de quelle sorte de relation il y aurait de ce côté-là. C'est pour ça—on a quelque chose qui fonctionne bien, qui fonctionne très bien et qui fonctionne depuis 11 ans—qu'on demande le statu quo pour que le commissaire et son bureau puissent continuer l'excellent travail qu'ils font.

M. Guy Bourgouin: J'ai entendu le premier ministre nous dire qu'il y a 300 cours francophones dans les universités bilingues, alors pourquoi est-ce que c'est important d'avoir notre université? Ils disent qu'il y a 300 cours, là, et que c'est tellement magnifique. Pourquoi devrait-on toujours avoir l'université?

M. Carol Jolin: Premièrement, les 300 cours incluent tous les cours qui se donnent en français dans toutes les universités, toutes confondues. Ce n'est pas simplement

dans les universités bilingues. Puis, si on voulait regarder l'offre de cours dans les universités anglophones, il y a plus de 300 cours qui ne sont pas remplis à capacité par les élèves. Donc, pour un, pour moi, ce n'est pas un argument qui est bon.

Maintenant, c'est important de pouvoir garantir aux élèves qu'ils vont pouvoir prendre un cours universitaire et l'avoir entièrement en français, ce que, très souvent et malheureusement, les universités bilingues ne peuvent pas garantir.

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Je connais nombre de personnes qui sont parties, parfois même du sud ici de la province, qui sont venues à Ottawa en se disant, « Je vais faire mon bac en français », et la seule année qu'ils ont eue en français, ç'a été la première.

M. Guy Bourgouin: On entend souvent que ça va coûter tant d'argent pour l'université, et c'est pour ça qu'on fait des compressions budgétaires. Mais une université, ça ne rapporte pas de l'argent, ça?

M. Carol Jolin: Dans n'importe quel milieu où il y a une université qui arrive, évidemment, il y a des étudiants de la province, il y a des étudiants d'autres provinces qui vont venir et il y a des étudiants qui vont venir de l'international. Si je prends seulement l'exemple du Collège Boréal qui va s'installer dans le quartier de la Distillerie dans quelques années, en 2020, les gens d'affaires autour sont vraiment excités de la venue du Collège Boréal, parce que ça va amener à l'économie des sous. Il y a des jeunes qui viennent de l'extérieur de la province et qui viennent de l'international et qui vont être à Toronto et qui vont dépenser dans cette région-là du collège.

Donc, je vois la même chose pour l'université. Une université a un impact économique sur la région où elle est.

The Chair (Hon. Steve Clark): Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for your testimony today. Language rights have been hard-fought in this province and this country, and it's ongoing. Do you think that the Franco-Ontarian community is prepared to challenge the charter rights, Carol?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Carol Jolin: We will do everything that we can do to solve this at the political level. That's why we're here today presenting to you and making sure that you know all the details of the issue and why it's important for us. But if we have to get there and we see that there's no other way, we will do it.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. Merci.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much. Just quickly—40 seconds—by citing budgetary considerations and cancelling the independent officer, would you equate that with putting a price on language rights in Ontario?

M. Carol Jolin: Je veux juste bien comprendre la question.

M. Gilles Bisson: C'est : a-t-il donné un prix sur—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Excuse me. The Chair speaks, please. You speak through the Chair.

Mr. Carol Jolin: There hasn't been a price, because there is no economy in doing it the way it's proposed. It's just taking the commissioner's office and putting it under the Ombudsman, so there's absolutely no saving there. It's just diluting the process, because you're going to have one more step to go, to approve everything. That's why we're worried about it, and the commissioner—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

ONTARIO REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'd now like to call the Ontario Real Estate Association. If you could please state your names for the record, and you'll have five minutes to present, and then questions.

Mr. Sean Morrison: Thank you. I'm Sean Morrison, with the Ontario Real Estate Association.

Mr. Matthew Thornton: Matthew Thornton.

Mr. Sean Morrison: Good afternoon, Chair, and good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today on Bill 57, the Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, and the accompanying legislation of the fall economic statement.

My name is Sean Morrison. I'm the provincial director for southern Ontario at OREA, as well as the government relations chair. With me is my counterpart, Matthew Thornton, OREA's vice-president of public affairs and communications.

OREA is the provincial trade association for Ontario's 70,000 real estate professionals who are members of Ontario's 38 real estate boards. Our members are active in every single riding in the province and communities right across Ontario.

We are here today to express our support for the important steps taken by the Ford government in its fall economic statement that will help protect the dream of home ownership for Ontarians today and for the next generation of owners in the future.

Ontario realtors believe that home ownership is a fundamental Canadian value and that it fosters strong and vibrant communities. That is why we've launched the Keep the Dream Alive campaign, and that's why we are pleased that the Ford government has followed our advice in working to ensure the dream of home ownership becomes a reality for families across Ontario.

OREA was thrilled to welcome Premier Ford to our recent Realtor Party Conference here in Toronto. During his remarks, the Premier spoke about the difficulties of his daughter's experience in trying to break into Ontario's housing market. Who among us hasn't experienced some degree of difficulty, or knows someone who has had trouble finding an affordable home?

Today, young people are being forced out of their communities, farther and farther away from where they work,

to find affordable homes that meet the needs of their growing families.

As a result, too many of them sit for hours every day in their cars going to and from work. Even worse, more and more young Ontarians are looking outside of our province for opportunities because they have no chance of achieving the Canadian dream of home ownership here in Ontario. You can imagine the frustration that they feel.

For generations, this province has been one where, if you worked hard and you got a good education and you followed the rules, you could own a home in Ontario. That is increasingly difficult today. In fact, according to the latest census, for the first time since John A. Macdonald, home ownership rates in Ontario are on the decline. We owe it to our young people and to the generations that follow to take bold action to address the issue of housing affordability in the GTHA.

Realtors are firm believers that addressing affordability starts with increasing the supply of homes. That is why OREA applauds Finance Minister Vic Fedeli's Housing Supply Action Plan, which was announced in the fall economic statement.

We are here today to offer our full co-operation to the government as it develops and executes its plan to promote home ownership by increasing the supply quickly and responsibly. To that end, OREA supports practical solutions to increasing the supply of homes, such as speeding up approval times, intensifying along transportation corridors and building more missing middle housing.

Ontario's realtors were pleased to see Minister Yurek's recent comments about the province's commitment to build new housing above GO stations, an issue OREA has been championing since 2017.

Ontario realtors are also pleased that the fall economic statement included a commitment to increase rental housing supply by exempting new units from rent control. This change will increase the overall supply of rental units in Ontario, which is good for those looking for increased choice in the rental market. It will also help renters, as well as mom and pop investors, who work with Ontario realtors in achieving financial security for their families.

In addition to the action on housing, OREA is supportive of the province's commitment to reduce red tape on Ontario businesses. Red tape and an overly burdensome regulatory environment can cripple businesses and cost Ontarians jobs, which is why OREA supports the Ford government's commitment to reducing red tape by 25%.

When it comes to real estate, there is no better example of pointless red tape than the outdated rules in the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, which prevent salespeople and brokers from forming personal real estate corporations. That is why OREA is proud to support Bill 38, the tax fairness for realtors act. This piece of legislation was introduced by the member from Sarnia-Lambton, Bob Bailey—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Sean Morrison:—and enjoys all-party support in the Legislature.

At present, most other regulated professionals in Ontario, including chartered accountants, lawyers, health professionals, mortgage brokers and others, can form personal real estate corporations. Allowing realtors to form PRECs will help reduce the costs associated with better business and, in turn, create jobs.

To conclude, Ontario realtors are dedicated members of communities right across Ontario. We are here to help families through what is one of the most important purchases of their lives, the purchase of their home. We take the dream of home ownership very seriously, which is why we are happy to be here today to support the commitment to action in the fall economic statement that will make this dream a reality for Ontario families.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the committee members. I'd be happy to answer any of your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you. We have five minutes for questions. We'll start with the opposition. Mr. Arthur?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much for your presentation. Would you just comment on the cancellation of the Development Charges Rebate Program and whether you think that will have a positive or negative impact on housing supply in Ontario?

Mr. Sean Morrison: Absolutely. Did you want to take it, Matthew?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: Sure. Our association doesn't have a position on that particular issue, but I think the general direction in the fall economic statement was a positive one. When we're thinking about housing supply, definitely we're encouraged by this government's prioritization of supply in general.

I think it's time for bold action. If you were to speak to families in the province, particularly young families, they would agree that bold action is necessary.

Mr. Ian Arthur: But your organization doesn't have a position on the cancellation of a \$100-million fund that directly relates to housing?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: I think there are other ways to tackle the issue of increasing housing supply, and this government to date has shown that they're committed to doing that.

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Mr. Ian Arthur: Along those lines, do you then believe that an unfettered market will supply the housing that's needed across Ontario, or that there is a role for government to play in the supply of housing across Ontario?

Mr. Sean Morrison: Yes, I think that there is absolutely a role for government to play in that, in reducing red tape around building permits and things like that. Right now, you are currently looking at, from the time you've purchased the land for development to the flushing of the first toilet, approximately 16 years before that house is ready. When we have 700,000 millennials entering into the market over the next 10 years, the current housing stock cannot support that. We need to streamline that process and reduce the red tape involved so that we can

get those houses to market for the consumers that are going to be there.

Mr. Ian Arthur: But just to be clear, you don't think that government should play a role in funding the development of housing across Ontario?

Mr. Sean Morrison: In what sense, sorry?

Mr. Ian Arthur: In supplying subsidies for housing, particularly affordable housing, across Ontario to help with demand.

Mr. Matthew Thornton: I think there are bigger issues at stake, particularly around, as Sean mentioned, red tape reduction—reducing approvals times, things of that nature. I think that's going to help bring a lot more homes online a lot quicker.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Any questions? Ms. Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You're talking about red tape, and the government just generally says they're going to reduce red tape by 25%. That's sort of an arbitrary number. You talked about some of those things that you're talking about. My question, I guess, would be, to you—you said that the government has been listening to you—what are some of the other examples of red tape that you think should be reduced to increase housing supply?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: Right now, we're actually working with the government to review the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, which is the governing piece of legislation for our industry. It's an act that is 16 years old; passed in 2002. Just to give you a sense, that's when fax machines were the preferred method of communication when it comes to real estate. There are lots of examples in that piece of legislation which we're working on with the province currently to reduce red tape on our sector.

Realtors are some of the most entrepreneurial folks in our economy, so I think if we can responsibly reduce red tape, not just in real estate but in housing and other sectors, that's going to have a positive benefit overall for the economy.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So you think reducing red tape for brokers will increase the housing supply. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: No, reducing red tape, I think, on real estate small businesses is going to have a positive net benefit. Just to give an example: Right now, if a member of ours is transacting seasonal properties in the province, they're required to register with the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, so they're required, effectively, to carry two licences to do something that with their real estate licence they're permitted to do. With that comes thousands of—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Matthew Thornton:—dollars in costs. That's a classic example of needless red tape that we're looking to get rid of.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. So you said that you're pleased that the Ford government has followed your advice, and I would say that from all the deputants you'd be the first group that's actually been consulted by the

government on this legislation. Every single deputant said they had absolutely no consultation, including on the French language commissioner change. And so my question is, since you've been consulting with the government, did you have any input into the fact that they've dissolved the Metrolinx—in your deputation, you said that you're pleased to see that they're building new housing above the GO station, so they're privatizing that building. Did you have any input in that change for this government?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: No. The short answer is no, we didn't have any conversations on Metrolinx.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: But did you have any input in their housing supply—I guess you were talking about the housing supply strategy. Did you have any input into that?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: We've met with the government a number of times, talking about housing, housing supply, reducing red tape, improving the affordability of home ownership in general. We—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll have to move questions now to the government side. I'll ask Ms. Skelly to start off.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen. I'd like you to, perhaps, give us your thoughts on what you believe has led to the low vacancy rates in Toronto and the surrounding area.

Mr. Sean Morrison: In regard to rental? Okay. Part of that is because we haven't had a lot of purpose-built rental, because it hasn't been economically sound to do so for developers. What in turn is happening is that private condos are being built, and then private homeowners are then basically trying to replace the rental stock by buying additional units, with equity or maybe through foreign investment. That is what is actually coming on the market now as new rental stock because there's no purpose-built rental being constructed these days because of the fact that it's not lucrative for a developer to do so.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Not lucrative. Perhaps you could expand a bit. MPP Shaw mentioned red tape. You were discussing the cost of red tape. Is there an actual deterrent with red tape, in terms of anyone who is considering building rental units? Does that play a key role in the profitability, perhaps, or the incentive to move forward and construct rental units?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: I would say the short answer is 100%. I think that landlords, generally speaking, are looking for a decent return on their investment—not a tremendous return; just a decent return. In particular, the move last year to extend rent control to all units in the province made that particularly challenging. That why we're encouraged to see this government press pause on rent control for newly built units. I think that's going to, over time, see a lot more rental units come into the marketplace.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Did you want to add anything, sir?

Mr. Sean Morrison: No. I think that's a good solution.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Just to pick up on something that Mr. Arthur had brought up: If I understand you correctly, what you're saying is that if we can improve the process, if we can shorten the build time, if we can make it more efficient for government to get approvals done, that is a more effective solution, in your mind, than giving you a subsidy to build.

Mr. Sean Morrison: Yes, that's correct. There's currently enough land available for development right now to satisfy the need, but it's tied up in the red tape of it being developed. It's not a matter of looking for new land; the lots exist. But a lot of what has to happen is, they have to be zoned properly, and we have to be building the types of units that millennials are looking at moving into, because there are going to be over 700,000 of them coming to market in the next 10 years. The housing stock that's current is not up to snuff.

Mr. Dave Smith: One of the other things he pointed out was that developers were building condos, and somebody in turn would purchase that condo and turn around as an individual and rent that out to someone else.

When we talk about the affordability of housing, whenever we're talking about housing. The developer receives a profit when they sell the condo. The person who purchases it has to recover their costs and receive a small profit. So right now, the way the system is set up, it's promoting individuals to purchase those individual units and then turn around and rent them. Wouldn't that increase the costs, and wouldn't it be more efficient for us, then, to reduce the barriers to build rental property, because that effectively would reduce the cost to the end user?

Mr. Sean Morrison: Yes, that's correct. Purpose-built rental would be more reasonable than going through the process of purchasing a condo and then flipping that over to rent again as an individual.

Mr. Dave Smith: Again, I come back to this: If we were to reduce the processes, if we made it more efficient and more effective for someone to come up with a purpose-built rental unit—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Dave Smith: —that would actually reduce the costs for the tenants.

Mr. Matthew Thornton: I think, generally speaking, the more supply of a product we can get to market, the more positive impact that's going to have on prices overall.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Would it be fair to say that—I come from Hamilton—

Mr. Sean Morrison: As do I.

Ms. Donna Skelly: —and my background is city hall. I get constant complaints about trying to get anything built in the city. There is a cost to delays; is that correct?

Mr. Sean Morrison: Absolutely.

Ms. Donna Skelly: And is it not the homeowner who has to bear that burden?

Mr. Sean Morrison: You're referring to second suites?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Anything—building, home construction, home ownership.

Mr. Matthew Thornton: There are real costs associated with delays. I think those are costs that really haven't been quantified very well to date. But any developer will tell you that a project that's stalled due to red tape is costing them money every single day.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Who pays for that?

Mr. Matthew Thornton: The end-user, at the end of the day—the homebuyer.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Driving up the cost of home ownership. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. I appreciate your testimony.

Mr. Matthew Thornton: Thank you very much for your time.

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Now I'd like to call up the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. Welcome. If you could please state your name for the record, and you can begin your presentation.

Mr. Irwin Elman: My name is Irwin Elman. I'm the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth of Ontario.

I want to speak to Bill 57, and particularly how it relates to my office.

I want you to know that our office, under our present legislation, has built a model of child advocacy that brings together individual rights, advocacy, systemic advocacy, community development advocacy and, recently, in the last year and a half or so, investigations. It does all that advocacy in an interdependent way.

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It's a model that builds on a 40-year history in the province, in the provincial government, when the Progressive Conservative government established a child advocate within a ministry in the Ontario public service.

It's a model that has been replicated in Ukraine and in Japan. It has been lauded in Poland. It has been lauded nationally and replicated nationally. And it's a model that is going to be wiped out with a stroke of a pen. It's unbelievable.

I was thinking of what to say to you. I know I have a few minutes left. I was thinking about this young person, who was a First Nations young person from a remote community, who was part of one of our gatherings of 100 or 150 First Nations young people from remote communities. The young people called it Feathers of Hope. We did this in accordance with our legislation, partnering with children and youth to bring their issues forward.

These young people come together, and they talk about what they have to say. You know—I don't have to tell you—how difficult their lives are, and how far apart their reality is from children's rights in Ontario.

Then, at the end of that gathering, they meet at what they call a listening table with decision-makers like you—ministers, deputy ministers, mayors, their own leadership,

chiefs come—and they present, probably for the first time ever in their lives, standing up and saying, “This is what we have to say.”

At this one event, it was very difficult for the decision-makers like you. There were a lot of tears in the room. The young people present in groups, their collective knowledge being as important or more important than their individual knowledge. That may be something cultural. They present in groups. There were a lot of tears. It wasn't the young people; it was the decision-makers.

Finally, one decision-maker couldn't take it anymore—I think it was a deputy minister—and said to the group that was presenting to them, “What can we do?”—so powerful. The young people would gather in front, if they got asked a question, just like where I am. They'd huddle and they'd work together. It was excruciating, waiting for them to come up with their answer, but they would come and bring their answer to the group.

I remember this young girl; I don't remember what community she was from. Her answer to “What can we do?” was, “Just listen.” She did not mean, “Just listen to all our recommendations that we've made”; there were a lot of them. She said, “Just listen,” because that was what they said they needed, to start off.

I think of her. What she said and that group said is no different than the disabled young people in our mandate. It's no different than young people in care. It's no different than young people in youth justice. It's no different than young people with mental health issues. They say, “Please, just listen.” Our office was the vehicle, the international model, that would provide a way for them to be heard—the only independent model in this province.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Irwin Elman: I think of a young person now in a group home who might call the Ombudsman—because this is how the Ombudsman works; he's not a child advocate—and be told to use the complaints process, instead of saying, “How can I help you? What's the problem? Let's work together to solve it.” She's at her wits' end, that young person in a group home.

I think about the young person in a hospital who was turned away. They came because they were suicidal in Barrie—or in Cobourg, where Chazz Petrella lived and sadly didn't make it. They phone us and say, “I need help.”

I think of the parents who are working with a disabled child, living with a disabled child, who cannot get what they need. In some rural communities, there isn't what they need, and they are as disabled, their family, as the child. They're alone, and they have nowhere to call—nowhere.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start questioning now from the government side. Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you for sharing your story and for sharing your views on changes to Bill 57. Would you walk us through the oversight functions that your office has had, and how they have evolved over the years?

Mr. Irwin Elman: We started with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, where there was a child

advocate office but it reported to the deputy minister. There was a move—a unanimous move, I believe—by the Legislature to move it to be independent.

When we were at the ministry, we were the first advocate office in the entire country. When we moved to independence, we were one of the last to become an independent office of the Legislature. Now all provinces and territories have some version of an independent office, save PEI and NWT. Our act said we didn't have the right to investigate. For the first eight years, while we pushed to get the right to access the information, we were to partner with children and youth to bring their issues forward; we were to promote the views of children and youth. That was the definition of advocacy, and that's how we developed our work, always striving to evolve into something more.

Then we were able to gain some limited investigation powers into the child welfare system—not across our mandate—and we're still evolving. We're looking at developing increasing partnerships with our Indigenous communities. We're looking at developing increasing partnerships with Black and LGBTQ communities. We're looking at developing our investigation powers. That's where we should be going: to continue to evolve on a laudable, reputable, great model of advocacy, not destroy it.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Mr. Elman. I appreciate you sharing that. I also wanted to ask, as you just said it has evolved and now with the ability to handle cases: How long does it typically take your office to conduct an investigation?

Mr. Irwin Elman: It depends on the investigation. We have 27 investigations open. It will take a while. We've had hundreds of calls, and I'm not at liberty to talk about—obviously, you don't talk about ongoing investigations.

Mr. David Piccini: No. I'm just wondering about the number of cases that you had. So you said 27?

Mr. Irwin Elman: Open now, yes.

Mr. David Piccini: And the average length: Have you quantified this?

Mr. Irwin Elman: No, we haven't had time, because we built the unit, and we're just finishing doing that now. We will have to evaluate that.

You asked about investigations. That doesn't include the 3,000 to 4,000 calls we get a year from children and young people which do not go to investigations but require us to listen and try to resolve those issues with children and youth in our mandate.

Mr. David Piccini: Can you just elaborate—I know we've heard that a number of complaints are often referred to the Office of the Ombudsman. I believe statistics that were shared were approximately 300 or so plus. I'm just wondering about a one-window, seamless approach. Do we not think that that would be better, having one window, sort of, for folks to access?

Mr. Irwin Elman: I think that form follows function. I don't know if you know that—

Mr. David Piccini: Yes.

Mr. Irwin Elman: Sadly, I don't think this decision was made with any sense of function. I think that the decision was made for some other reason.

So I'd like to talk about children before we talk about systems. I'd like to talk—and that's what I brought here—about what the children need. Right? And then let's create a system that works best for them. I, frankly, think expanding—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Irwin Elman: —the powers of our office would be better, but we haven't got there yet.

Mr. David Piccini: In my conversations locally, I've had a number of chats with Rebound and others in our community.

Mr. Irwin Elman: I know Rebound.

Mr. David Piccini: To echo what you said, being that voice and being able to call in, I know one of the things they said—I respect what you just said, but I think it's a little more nuanced than that. One of the challenges is having that somewhere to go and a more streamlined approach. Parents have come with disabled children and said, "We can't make sense of the paperwork." I've been given that paperwork, and I, as an elected official, have had trouble. So do we not all, together, want to try and streamline this a little?

Mr. Irwin Elman: You might, but what I'm trying to say to you is that the bill doesn't allow for what you've just said. Actually, kids in Rebound, if they're not living in residence, won't be able to call. So I agree with you—

Mr. David Piccini: The Ombudsman: They can't use that office?

Mr. Irwin Elman: No, not under the present act. Children receiving mental health services are not covered under the legislation at present.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you.

Mr. Irwin Elman: That's why—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Excuse me. Sorry. We have to move on.

We will move to the opposition questioning. Mr. Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Certainly I know, with respect to the schedule part where we remove the child advocate within Bill 57, and understanding the issues in the north with the mental health service provisions, mental health services for children and adolescents—again, earlier I said it's very minimal at best and non-existent at worst. I know we won't ever know how many lives this advocate saved; we won't know that. But there's certainly a number that we can use where we lost young people—youth—through the systems that are in place, whether it's a lack of health services, a lack of mental health or a lack of the child welfare that's in place.

I'm just wondering: Were you ever consulted on the changes, that they were going to do this?

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Mr. Irwin Elman: No, I wasn't consulted, and I don't believe children or youth were consulted. I don't believe First Nations were consulted.

I want to go back to that point that you've made in that question, if I could. There is this sense—and I mean no real malice, but it's how I feel—this shock-and-awe approach to making a decision. I really wish that the questions that were asked previously could have been discussed because the legislation does not allow for children and youth, in our full mandate, to be able to use the Ombudsman's office. Children receiving mental health services are not covered under this legislation. It pained me to do that, but our submission you'll receive by 6 makes some suggestions on how you could include children in our full mandate, even under the Ombudsman—which is not enough, but at least it allows you to pull some children off the tracks so they don't get hit by the train that's coming. That includes First Nations children in our north who seek service, because our act allows us to advocate for children seeking service, where service may not exist in the northern communities. They're not covered.

So, if you're concerned about children at Rebound or other services, then you'll consider making those changes to your own legislation—and I'm speaking to the Legislature as a whole—instead of just making a change without looking at how to do that and not allowing people—children, in this case—to be, potentially, in harm's way.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to just point out that you were not consulted. Not very many people were. We had the Ontario real estate board here, and they were consulted, and I'd just like to point out—is it true that you found out about this through the media?

Mr. Irwin Elman: I found out about this, yes, through a CBC News report the morning before it was announced. I phoned the minister's office to ask, and it wasn't until about half an hour before it was tabled in the Legislature.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. So that speaks to this inconceivable change that they're making to the most vulnerable children in our community. One of the reasons the government is putting forward is that this is a cost saving, but I will say that we, as the opposition, have not had any answers as to what the cost savings are. I was in a briefing with about 60 ministerial staff who said they have yet to identify the cost savings, that that will come later.

So, if it wasn't about cost savings, can you imagine what this change was for, the reason for this change?

Mr. Irwin Elman: I don't know.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Fife? One minute.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for being here. When we have questioned the government on the rationale and the consequences for this decision, the minister has stood in her place and said that she, and she alone, will be the advocate for the province of Ontario, and she will be the independent child advocate. Can you please speak to the importance of the independence of your office, because I don't think the minister will be critical of her own ministry going forward?

Mr. Irwin Elman: Well, can't be—or critical of her own government. It's just the way politics works.

I know the minister. I think she has a big heart. She should be an advocate for children. All ministers should be but, in particular, her with her ministry. But she cannot be both a minister and a child advocate, because she's put in a position of conflict. She has to make—as she will tell you, I'm sure—tough decisions, and a child advocate is meant, and our act is meant, to stand beside children. We do not make the tough decisions. I know I'm not a minister. The government has to make those tough decisions.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you.

Mr. Irwin Elman: Thank you all.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We appreciate your time. Thank you.

ONTARIO HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): I'd now like to call up the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

Thank you for coming. If you could please state your names for the record, and you can begin your presentation.

Mr. Stephen Hamilton: Stephen Hamilton, Ontario Home Builders' Association.

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, good afternoon. My name is Mike Collins-Williams. I'm joined by Stephen Hamilton.

OHBA represents 4,000 member companies and is organized into a network of 29 local associations across Ontario.

Last year, OHBA shared with this committee our concerns regarding real challenges to the delivery of housing supply, which was not keeping up with demand, resulting in increasing prices and higher rents. In the years since, we've seen the housing supply problem get worse. But a couple of weeks ago, the fall economic statement launched a consultation for a Housing Supply Action Plan as well as the tabling of Bill 57. OHBA is very supportive of both of these items.

Our industry faces a variety of interrelated challenges that affect our members' ability to build the necessary supply of new housing to meet growing demand—and demand is growing. International immigration is up, struggling economies out west are driving interprovincial migration and—call it the “Trump effect”—international students are up significantly as well. Quite simply, high prices and rents have made it harder for the people to afford the housing they need.

This is exactly why OHBA is so supportive of the government's announcement to launch a Housing Supply Action Plan. OHBA believes that the Ontario government has an opportunity, through the Housing Supply Action Plan, not only to deliver more supply but to create more jobs and fight the deficit with increased tax revenue through higher levels of economic activity.

OHBA believes that creating more housing of all types and sizes that people need will help make home ownership and renting more affordable to give home believers more choice.

I'm going to mention each of the five themes in the consultation, all of which we will be providing advice to the government about:

(1) Speed: It takes too long for development projects to get approved. We believe there are opportunities to find efficiencies in the process without compromising the integrity of the process.

(2) Mix: There are too many restrictions on what can be built to get the right mix of housing where it's needed. We need a diversity of housing types and tenures for all stages of the life cycle. The so-called missing middle, gentle density, may be the sweet spot for families and planners, but it's among the hardest types of housing projects to get approved.

(3) Cost: Development costs are too high because of the high land prices and government-imposed fees and charges. As taxes and other government charges increase, these are not absorbed by the industry but are added to the cost of a home.

(4) Rent: OHBA supports the government's vacancy decontrol approach that will continue to provide rent control to every single tenant in a rental unit in an existing building today in Ontario. Not one person in a rental unit or any existing building in Ontario was impacted by the government decision to encourage new supply by lifting rent control from new buildings, going forward.

(5) Innovation: I'll just say that our members are all about innovation.

The bottom line, from OHBA's perspective, is that it's getting harder and more complicated to bring new housing supply—ownership, rental, high-rise, low-rise or the missing middle—to the growing communities and people who need it. Let's change that and bring more supply to the people.

I'm going to turn it over to Stephen.

Mr. Stephen Hamilton: Bill 57 also makes amendments to the Construction Act which provide more powers to the authorized nominating authority, or ANA, a private body that will develop and oversee training and qualifications for adjudicators and set fees for adjudicators when there is a payment dispute. This begins in October of next year.

We believe that MPPs should take a serious second look at the payment scheme created by the previous government, which will add red tape, produce more work stoppages and increase administrative and legal costs in construction.

Both public and private sector owners have voiced concerns over the pending mandatory payment and adjudication scheme introduced by the previous government. It needs to be emphasized that the past government essentially exempted itself from the payment timelines in the act for alternative financing and procurement, AFP, or 3P construction projects. Those contracts will be able to delay invoices until work is verified as complete. It is completely unacceptable that the previous government essentially exempted 3P construction contracts—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Stephen Hamilton:—which include massive multinational contractors, from the payment terms of prompt payment.

Ontario is now embarking on a massive experiment in the construction sector by embracing prompt payment and mandatory adjudication. Ontario will be the only jurisdiction in the world that has both a lien process and a mandatory adjudication process. While this might be a win for the legal community because it provides another outlet for litigation, this is a loss for small and medium-sized builders across Ontario, which will have a difficult time adapting to this new and complicated process.

It is also a loss for Ontario taxpayers, who will have to pay more for the delivery of infrastructure. This was outlined by municipal and public sector construction buyers like the city of Toronto, AMO and TTC.

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I'll just end with this: Creating a new avenue for costly litigation and new administrative costs on small business is the wrong direction for construction. If implemented in October 2019, this would be a very experimental concept that will mean Ontario is less open for business.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much. We'll start questions from the opposition side. Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for your deputation here today. I just want to ask a few questions about the types of housing.

You talked about how your organization is interested in all types and sizes of housing. I think one of the things that we are interested in is the affordability of housing. Can you talk a little bit about how your organization, beyond supply—we've heard a lot of Keynesian economics here today. But beyond supply and demand, what are your organization's policies around ensuring that there is affordable housing, whether it's affordable home ownership or affordable rental—beyond supply?

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: I'd say two things. I'm going to focus partially on the market side and partially on the affordable side. By delivering more supply and by addressing a couple of things, hopefully, in the Housing Supply Action Plan to reduce government-imposed charges and streamline the approvals process—by bringing more supply to the market faster—that would address some of the market side, to reduce some of the pressures.

As far as direct affordable housing goes, it's complicated. We're not building enough. I think a lot of the elements in the Housing Supply Action Plan to reduce some of the red tape and streamlining—because an affordable housing provider still goes through the same planning process that our members go through, even if they're producing for a different type of community need, like affordable housing. A lot of affordable housing projects are still subject to development charges, parkland dedication and section 37 fees.

I think there are opportunities, both on the market side and the affordable side, to find some efficiencies and to

streamline some of those processes. The bottom line is, we need more of all of it.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Does the Ontario Home Builders' Association have any opinion on the inclusionary zoning policies that will ensure that buildings have to have a certain percentage of their units that are affordable home ownership?

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: We supported a partnership model to an approach with inclusionary zoning with the previous government. There was a three-year consultation process, working towards a partnership model in which costs would be split 50-50 between the private sector and the public sector.

For better or for worse, a couple of weeks before the election, the previous government decided to change the draft regulation and thrust 100% of the cost on the private sector. We don't think that's fair. We were willing to come to the table and split the cost, but the current regulation that was passed thrust 100% of the cost on the private sector. Ultimately, those costs would get paid by other buyers or other renters. So it's a cross-subsidization where, yes, we'll create some affordable units, but the reality is, then, the rest of the units would be less affordable.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So I can take it from that that you would say there is a role for government to financially subsidize the kinds of affordable housing units that we so badly need in Ontario.

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: Without having government involvement with “affordable” housing, there is a certain component of the market that the private sector cannot support. This is what the partnership model was about. It was about municipalities coming to the table and waiving or reducing development charges, and municipalities coming to the table and expediting approvals or removing parkland dedication or section 37. These are costly items that, if everybody comes to the table, we can reduce the cost to housing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You did mention the Development Charges Rebate Program. Is that what you mentioned? Is your organization supportive of this government cancelling that?

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: I think the reality with a \$15-billion deficit is that the government can do more by streamlining the process, by cutting red tape and by ensuring faster approvals and more certainty in process.

The previous Development Charges Rebate Program—while it was a couple of hundred million dollars, once that's spread around the entire province, it won't do nearly as much as actually fixing the approvals process and fixing some of these other underlying issues.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. So it sounds like you've had some input or awareness of the supply housing plan that the government is putting forward. Were you consulted on this?

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: We've been saying the same thing for years. The previous Liberal governments: We spoke to them when the Fair Housing Plan

came forward. None of these positions have changed. We've spoken to the Liberal Party, we've spoken to the Progressive Conservative Party and we've spoken to the New Democratic Party about these issues.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. Finally, you keep talking a lot about red tape. This government is removing rent controls. Would you consider rent controls a form of red tape? There's some very significant data that comes from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. which actually shows that in the periods when rent controls were in place, it didn't impact one way or another on the supply.

A two-barrelled question: Red tape—is that rent controls, and can you comment on the data that is before us that does not show any increase in supply when there are periods of rent control being in place?

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: Unfortunately, we don't live in a one-factor world. That change with the 1991 rental exemption was made in the immediate aftermath of a major recession and a housing crash in the 1990s. Lenders were nervous and developers were in—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Okay. I'm sorry; we're going to have to cut you off.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. Good answer—it was going to be a good one, I know.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll have to move to the government side: Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: If you would like, you have permission to carry on and complete your thought on that, please.

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: Lenders were nervous and developers were in precarious financial positions. Then following that market turnaround in the mid-2000s, developers had to sell units to get financing, which sort of started the condo boom. Investors, knowing that their units would not be subject to rent control, increased their purchases. While there was not a lot of purpose-built rental, a lot of the condo boom, especially some of the towers going up right downtown on subway stations—a lot of that is individual investors.

The elimination of rent control actually did spur a huge increase in rental supply—not purpose-built rental supply, and absolutely we need more purpose-built rental—but it did increase rental supply through the investor component in the condo market.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you both very much for coming today. I know we hear at a very high level here with two very differing approaches: one that, with bigger government and bigger bureaucracy, we can solve the problem; and then another is when we talk about red tape. We've heard somewhat flippant remarks on the 25% reduction on red tape, but what our government has announced is far more nuanced on that. We held red tape reduction round tables in my riding. Some of the regulatory changes kept jobs in our community, with a business services unit at our police force.

But I want to take a deep dive on some of the red tape in the building industry, if you could just elaborate a bit more. When we say that we want to create the conditions,

talk to us a bit about that red tape and how it's that ogre on your back.

Mr. Stephen Hamilton: It's a really good question. I think the government signalled, in a lot of recent legislation and decisions they've made—there has been a lot of positive movement on that. If you look at the elimination of the Ontario College of Trades, which we heard from our members was a massive barrier for hiring new apprentices—moving to a 1-to-1 ratio. We get phone calls all the time now. People are looking for resumés now because they're able to hire apprentices. It really is a game-changer in terms of being able to kick-start the construction sector. I think, absolutely, you're seeing it already in some of those immediate decisions you've made, in terms of getting young people into the construction sector.

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: And I would add to that, more directly, on building new supply—that's sort of on the construction labour side: The Housing Supply Action Plan consultation is open until, I believe, January 25. We're certainly going to be active in that, and there will be a number of suggestions coming forward specific to improving the planning process and ways that we can speed up planning decisions locally.

An example would be pre-zoning avenues or transit corridors. For example, I live just off of the Danforth in Toronto. That subway opened 60 years ago, but there are single-family houses right next to transit stations. I'm certainly not advocating for towers, but surely there would be an opportunity for mid-rise zoning, which would vastly speed up the process and allow us to build transit-oriented development right on top of stations.

Mr. David Piccini: As we're making these decisions and we launch that consultation, do you think that ultimately the decision is better made by bureaucrats in a bigger government or that it's better driven on the ground by builders, by homeowners, by community?

Mr. Stephen Hamilton: I think a lot of it is unlocking—obviously, I would agree with the latter approach. But a lot of it is getting out of the way. There are a lot of restrictions. As Mike said, there's a subway line on a major transit route and there are single-family houses there. Is that the best way of maximizing usage of that transit line? Probably not.

Red tape comes in a lot of forms, and regulation comes in a lot of forms. Unfortunately, I have to go back to the Construction Lien Act. That will, if implemented as is, create a significant administrative barrier for small business, because now they have to verify payments every 14 days. It makes no distinction if you're building a backyard deck or if you're building a hospital. They both follow the same process.

It wasn't this government's bill, but I think it does need a serious second look. The fact that you see a lot of public sector owners voicing similar concerns that we are—I think that's evidence of a problem.

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The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I think we have about 20 seconds, but I just wanted to ask: We talk about red tape continually

in this government, and being open for business. Can you quantify or explain, in 20 seconds or less, the impact of this burdensome red tape on your industry and the lack of homes and affordable housing?

Mr. Michael Collins-Williams: Just look at the price of housing and the price of rents the last couple of years. The fact of the matter is, demand is vastly exceeding the ability of our industry to move projects through the approvals and ultimately build them. If we can speed up the process, if we can deal with some of the red-tape issues, our members are ready to build and—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much.

AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION,
LOCAL 113

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We have our last presenter for the day, the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 113. Welcome.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Frank Grimaldi. I'm president/business agent of ATU, Local 113.

Local 113 has over 11,000 members who operate and maintain all aspects of the Toronto Transit Commission. ATU members perform virtually every role in the provision of public transit, including operating and maintaining vehicles, fare collection, administration, customer service, as well as administrative and professional support. Our members are highly skilled, work hard and do a remarkable job, and take hundreds of thousands of Ontarians to work, school and everywhere else every day. We do this, at the TTC in particular, with smaller financial contributions from governments of all levels than any other major transit company in North America.

We come before you today with significant concerns about this legislation. These amendments give the Minister of Transportation greater power and control over transit planning in Ontario. Our central concern is that this increased power and control will be used to push down a path towards privatization of public transit in Ontario, notably seizing portions of existing public transit that it wants, particularly the TTC subway system.

Privatization does not work. It costs more; it takes longer, it is less accountable and it does so at the expense of good jobs which support families. We are already paying a high price for privatization. Metrolinx went to a private sector contractor to develop Presto cards. The Presto card has since been forced on the TTC. It has been a failure. Anyone who takes the TTC knows that the machines are frequently broken and people are riding free. The TTC is losing millions of dollars and had to take Metrolinx to court.

Metrolinx has taken over the provision of LRT lines in Toronto. Through a series of quick contract flips, Metrolinx has allowed Bombardier to maintain the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, a contract that may last for 20 years. Bombardier is the same company that has already failed to deliver vehicles on time, the same company that is now

recalling vehicles because they are not fit for purpose and need to be repaired. If Bombardier cannot deliver fit-for-purpose streetcars in the first place, why would anyone give them a long-term contract to maintain the LRT?

In contrast, we already have a highly skilled and experienced workforce at the TTC that does this work and knows how to do so. The workers have maintained both tracks and streetcars at the TTC for generations. In fact, TTC workers have successfully kept streetcars running for years past their lifetime. Why are we abandoning workers at the TTC who deliver and rewarding the company that did not deliver?

The goal is to provide integrated transit across the GTA and Ontario. This is not achieved through chopping up and privatizing transit. The TTC and its workers deliver transit to hundreds of thousands of people every day. Chopping up the TTC and handing it over in parts to the private sector will lead to more costs, less transit and less say for the people who use transit. Privatization and chopping up the TTC system are bad for transit workers, bad for transit riders and bad for Ontario.

It begs the question as to why. Why do this minister and this government need greater power over transit planning in Ontario? There's no reason to think that Doug Ford's privatization would be better than Mike Harris's or Kathleen Wynne's.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: We are very proud of the high level of service we provide at the TTC, at the lowest subsidies in North America. We want to keep providing this unparalleled level of service and efficiency, but we can't do that if parts of the system are parcelled off to private contractors. We would ask the committee to give these ill-thought-through amendments close scrutiny.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): We'll start with the government. We have five minutes of questioning. Mr. Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: I've gone through the bill a number of times, and I can't find any place where we reference privatization. Can you show me directly in the bill where we talk about how we're going to privatize something? Because I haven't been able to find it at all, and yet that was the main focus of what your deputation was.

You kept talking about your great workers, which I will freely give you. You've got some fabulous people working there who do a wonderful job, and you were absolutely correct when you said that you kept a number of LRTs running well past their intended lifetime.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: The 50-year-old streetcars, yes.

Mr. Dave Smith: Yes, you did a great job with it. Don't get me wrong; you've done fabulous, fabulous work. But I don't see anywhere in our bill where we talk about privatization and how we're going to do what you're saying we're going to do, so I'm confused, because I was involved in hearings on all of this—

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Well, don't be confused, because—

Mr. Dave Smith: I haven't asked my question yet.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Okay, go ahead. Sorry.

Mr. Dave Smith: I am really confused, though, because you've come up and talked about privatization, and that it's bad and that we shouldn't do it, and you've talked about the great things that your people do. As I said, I agree with you 100%: You've got some fabulous, fabulous people who've extended the life of systems when the city of Toronto wasn't able to get any development done on transit. The city has been in gridlock for a number of years now, and there are a number of projects that should be moved forward that haven't been able to move forward because decisions haven't been made.

Coming to my question, then, can you tell me, can you show me in this bill, please, where we talk about privatization? Because I can't find it.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Well—

Mr. Dave Smith: I can find places where we talk about how we're going to bring it in and different things that we've talked about as a government on how we're going to improve transit in this area, and how we recognize that there's gridlock, but I can't find privatization.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: I've yet to hear—I've spoken to Mr. Ford, I believe, close to a half dozen times. I haven't heard this government say, "We are not intending to privatize part of the TTC or any part." What I've heard was that they were going to upload the \$3.9 billion in assets from the TTC, and then they might let the TTC operate, which means doing the driving and not the maintenance.

You know what happened at the Mimico station just the other day. It's privatized. What I'm told is that this government, the ones who gave the air rights over subway stations to P3s—every subway station will look like York Mills, where you drive in under the building and you come out from under the building, and somebody makes millions of dollars on top. That's what we're talking about.

The province needs to provide funding for the TTC, so they—

Mr. Dave Smith: Could you go back to my question, though? Could you show me where in the bill we talk about—

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Well, you show me where it doesn't say it.

Mr. Dave Smith: Nowhere in it do we say "privatization." Not a single—

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: I have asked—

Mr. Dave Smith: Privatization is not in it at all.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Are you telling me that there's no privatization on the table? Is that what you're telling me?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm telling you that nowhere in here do we talk about privatization. You're telling me that we do, so I'm asking you: where?

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: I have asked the Premier to tell me that there was no privatization. Are you telling me that there's no privatization?

Mr. Dave Smith: Again, can you tell me where in this bill we talk about privatization? Because we don't.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: You tell me where it says that there is no privatization.

Mr. Dave Smith: Nowhere do we say "privatization." There's nothing in this.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: There are references.

Mr. Dave Smith: Could you please tell me where we reference it? Because I'm lost. I can't find it.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Are you telling me there's no privatization?

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Mr. Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Let me just try a different approach. Because it's not specified there, you're inferring it?

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: That's right.

Mr. David Piccini: So you've made a number of inferences from this.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: I have discussed this with a number of people, and no one in the government has said, "We want to do this to provide seamless transit, but there's not going to be any"—

Mr. David Piccini: Well, let's go back to what we have said. We've said, as my colleague alluded to, that there's a lot of dysfunction, that people are spending their time on the road, people are spending their time in traffic.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Mr. David Piccini: There is serious dysfunction, and various reports show that we have a system that can be improved. We know from other depositions today that all the delays are costing us money. It's costing us time. Don't you see this—I mean, the government is taking some responsibility here. We're responsible stewards of the taxpayers' government. Do you not support that?

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Mr. Frank Grimaldi: So 70% of the funding for the TTC comes from the fare box. That's the number one problem. Number two, I agree with you that we should speed up construction of the relief line; we should speed up construction to stop the bottleneck at Bloor Street. I agree with you. If in fact the government has said that's what they want to do, I would agree with you. However, I haven't had anyone saying that we're not going to privatize. It seems to me that when you open it to P3s, that's exactly what it means.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): That concludes the government questioning. We have five minutes of opposition. Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you so much for your testimony today. I very much appreciate it. As the government has pointed out, the word "privatization" doesn't necessarily appear in this bill, but would you say a likely outcome of the legislation, as it is written, would be the privatization? Or would it make privatization easier, what's written in the bill? Would it possibly lead to privatization?

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Our concern is that they would upload the subway to Metrolinx and Metrolinx would do with it the same thing they did with the Eglinton LRT, which is privatize to a company that cannot deliver anything. We're just sending brand new streetcars back to be welded because they didn't do the job the first time.

Mr. Ian Arthur: So even though the word “privatization” isn’t necessarily specifically in the legislation, it creates an environment where that is a likely outcome?

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Absolutely, and if someone said there is no privatization, we would certainly look forward to working with the government to try to improve transit. That’s what we want as well. But that’s never been put forth, and I’ve asked the question numerous times.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I have also never heard the government say that there will be no privatization through this move.

It’s my understanding that assets are being uploaded but liabilities and operational costs will not be uploaded. Is that accurate?

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: The understanding I have is that the \$3.9 billion of the subway will be uploaded. The TTC would then run it and keep the fares. But as I said, the fares are 70% to run the TTC; 30% subsidies, the lowest in any major city in North America. They’re keeping these 50-year-old streetcars going with Scotch tape, for heaven’s sake. We’re doing our jobs. We’re concerned that as part of this, some of the people who have contributed so much to the TTC—the workers—are going to be the ones who get screwed; excuse the language.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I appreciate that very much. Do you have any—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Grimaldi. The history of the Toronto Transit Commission as a public entity, a public transit—I mean, as you said, there are good jobs, it provided good jobs, and it was accessible and affordable and public. It allowed some of the growth that we’ve seen in Toronto, 1945, post-war. The Toronto Transit Commission, as a public transit entity, supported that kind of growth that we are still living off of in the city of Toronto. I wanted to let you know that I do support the idea that public transit—this is the bricks and mortar of the transit system that we paid for, our parents, our grandparents paid for. Really, it does belong to the residents of Ontario, and it’s my opinion that it isn’t really just the government’s to sell. In fact, they should be retaining that. It really is a legacy. It’s something they should be retaining to pass on to future generations, even if the streetcars are held together with tape. Did you want to comment on that?

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: What I was going to say is that I believe that the province looks after the whole province and I believe that the city of Toronto looks after the city of Toronto. If the city of Toronto is going to be affected in a negative way because the outskirts don’t need as much transit as Toronto does—I mean, if you built a subway up to Richmond Hill or up to Oshawa, you’d bring more people—right now, on the new line that goes to Vaughan,

when you get to St. Clair West in the rush hour in the morning, you can’t get in. At Yonge and Bloor, they’re nine, 10 people deep. Now they’re starting to go to St. George: eight, nine people deep.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: It’s unsafe.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: They have a number of supervisors who try to keep the people from being pushed on to the track.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that.

You were challenged to say where it says there’s privatization in the bill, but certainly the very fact that this bill dissolves Metrolinx—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So Metrolinx is dissolved and it now falls under the Ministry of Transportation. You alluded to this, that very recently, at Mimico, it’s private money, privatization of the transit-oriented development there. It may not say it in the bill, but the actions of this government are showing us that. Can you just comment a little bit on your opinion of that?

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: What it seems to me is that the builders are going to get to build the subway station and then they get the space around it. I heard that Bathurst station’s land is worth about \$113 million, and they would get it for nothing. They would build the subway station, they’d build on top, and they’d get all that money. So somebody is going to make a fortune, and it’s not going to be the transit riders of Toronto. It’s not.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Do I have time to ask a question about—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): There’s 20 seconds.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —how this will impact fares for working people who need to be able to afford to—

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Unless there are more subsidies to the TTC, the fares are going to go up, because there’s no way that this system can continue to run the way it is.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So we’ll have a two-tiered system. We’ll have people who won’t be able to—

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you very much.

Mr. Frank Grimaldi: Thank you. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Crawford): Thank you, everybody, for testifying today. We’ve now concluded our witness schedule for the day.

The committee will meet for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill tomorrow in committee room 1 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

This meeting is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1756.

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