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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

F-59

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

F-59

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Cutting Red Tape to Build
More Homes Act, 2024

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Tuesday 14 May 2024

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

Loi de 2024 pour réduire les
formalités administratives afin
de construire plus de logements

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mardi 14 mai 2024

Chair: Ernie Hardeman
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Président : Ernie Hardeman
Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

Tuesday 14 May 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Mardi 14 mai 2024

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

**CUTTING RED TAPE TO BUILD
MORE HOMES ACT, 2024
LOI DE 2024 POUR RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
AFIN DE CONSTRUIRE PLUS
DE LOGEMENTS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 185, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Good morning, everyone. We'll call this meeting of the—

Mr. Mike Harris: Committee on finance and economic affairs.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): I just wasn't quite ready to start.

We'll call this meeting of the committee on finance and economic affairs to order. We're meeting to resume public hearings on Bill 185, an Act to amend various Acts.

Please wait until recognized before starting to speak, and as always, all comments must come through the Chair.

As a reminder, each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation. After we've heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the slot will be for questions from members of the committee. This time for question will be divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent member.

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE
GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): With that, we will call the first table of presentations. The first table of three presenters will be McMaster University, Environmental Defence and George Brown College. I believe McMaster and George Brown College will be virtual.

The first presenter will be McMaster University. As I mentioned in my opening comments, you will have seven minutes for your presentation. At six minutes, I will say, "One minute," and at seven minutes, I will say, "Thank

you," so don't stop in between that time. We also ask that you start the presentation by introducing yourself, and anyone else who is speaking during the presentation, to introduce themselves before they speak.

With that, McMaster University.

Ms. Saher Fazilat: Thank you, Chair, and good morning to you and to the members of the committee. My name is Saher Fazilat. I am the vice-president of operations and finance for McMaster University. In my role, I oversee the university's administrative, financial and ancillary services, as well as provide leadership for our substantial infrastructure portfolio. This includes \$5 billion in financial assets, 400 acres of land and over 10 million square feet of building space, numbers that continue to grow as we expand to accommodate more space for our growing student population.

We are one of Hamilton's largest anchor institution employers and economic drivers. Though our presence is not limited just to Hamilton, as we have campuses in Burlington, Waterloo and Niagara region, we have a very strong and growing presence in downtown Hamilton. Our main campus is in west Hamilton along the 403 corridor.

A KPMG study commissioned in 2017 estimated our economic impact on southern Ontario as \$3.9 billion annually through jobs created, research and development, and talent creation. This impact has grown substantially since then.

We are one of Canada's most research-intensive universities and, by many counts, one of the top 100 global universities. Some of our health sciences programs rank in the top quartile in the world. This reputation brings in a very strong domestic and global demand, resulting in the need for more residence beds. For many years, we have not been able to guarantee domestic first-year students a residence bed. Therefore, since 2017, we have embarked on a journey to add more beds. By the end of 2026, we will complete over 2,800 new student beds, adding more than 50% to our current inventory. In fact, McMaster is building the most new residence housing in Ontario.

This is important for so many reasons, not the least of which is taking pressure off the local housing market. But there are also proven academic advantages for students who live in university residences. Dorm living is an ideal scenario for university students and especially for first-year undergraduates. Research has shown that students living in residence build strong friendships and a great sense of community, have higher self-esteem, are more

satisfied with their university experience and perform better academically.

But these projects come at a tremendous cost, along with dwindling options for financing these buildings. Operating funds for universities have come under severe stress due to frozen tuition and a lack of funding. Since we lack capital to build residences ourselves, it will come as no surprise to the committee that our most recent housing projects are, in large part, enabled by public-private partnerships, and that their timelines have been severely protracted by onerous requirements in the Planning Act.

Let me give you an example. Just this past fall, construction began on a new 1,400-bed undergraduate residence. We call it Lincoln Alexander Hall, a private-public partnership that will build our largest residence yet and will allow us to finally offer guaranteed residence spaces to all our first-year undergraduates. This project has been in the works for many years. Our first Planning Act engagement with city planners to start the official plan and zoning process was back in the spring of 2017. Shovels finally hit the ground in November of 2023, a good six and a half years later.

Even if one counts the delay of the pandemic, this is nowhere near reasonable. Given a 30-month construction cycle, we would have by now nearly 1,400 students living in the state-of-the-art residence. They will now have to wait until 2026.

Timing aside, while many Planning Act requirements make sense for commercial building projects, that does not hold true for universities, which are unique in that we build and maintain our own infrastructure, roads, pipes and even our own security and safety teams, including special constable services. We are a city within a city.

Take parking. It makes sense generally for cities to use Planning Act authorities to create rules around parking, in most cases by establishing a ratio of parking spaces for a number of units in a building. People drive to and from home and work, and they need somewhere to park.

But applying this requirement to purpose-built student residence buildings where students live and study doesn't make sense, especially when most students, particularly those choosing to live in residence, don't own cars. Precious time is wasted each time the university proposes a major building project haggling over parking that could be spent getting shovels in the ground, building residence spaces and creating jobs for workers.

Given the limited availability of land, surface parking lots are not sufficient to meet the unrealistic parking demand. We have to divert financial resources to build expensive parking structures and underground parking, which come at 10 times the cost of a surface parking space, hence taking the capital dollars away from meaningful construction that supports housing and our academic and research mission.

That's why McMaster is so pleased to see the proposed exemption for universities from the Planning Act included in Bill 185. These changes recognize the unique circumstances of university infrastructure, the communities we build and maintain, as well as the critical need to get

student housing built faster and cheaper. With the universities exempted from the onerous and disconnected building permits process, projects will be completed faster. This is imperative as the demand to come to McMaster and Hamilton continues to grow.

I appreciate this opportunity to appear this morning, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Our next presentation will be the Environmental Defence.

Mr. Phil Pothen: Good afternoon, my name is—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Good morning.

Mr. Phil Pothen: Oh, good morning—sorry. I got up at 4:30 today, so it's been a long day already.

Good afternoon. My name is Phil Pothen. I'm counsel, land use and land development program manager, and Ontario environment program manager with the charity Environmental Defence.

Our non-partisan team of experts is focused on identifying and advocating for the most effective policies to safeguard Ontario's natural heritage and species at risk, and prevent runaway climate change, but also to fix problems like environmental racism and classism that can be produced by housing shortages in existing neighbourhoods.

We have been consistent about telling government that there is no way to solve these problems, and in particular the housing shortage, without removing the zoning, building code and other direct regulatory barriers to building enough homes within Ontario's existing neighbourhoods, especially low-rise residential neighbourhoods, to house everyone, every household that wants to live in Ontario, and enough to transform all of our existing car-dependent, post-World War II, low-density developments into denser, walkable and transit-supporting complete communities where most people don't feel they need a car to live comfortably, even if they choose to have one, and ensuring that none of the farmland that was already designated for development before 2022 is wasted at low density—the floor should be around a hundred people per hectare—and permanently slamming the brakes on outward expansion of settlement boundaries.

Ontario needs to shift most of the wood frame construction that we've been wasting on low-rise top-ups and McMansions and low-density greenfield subdivisions to wood frame mid-rise buildings and townhomes within what are now low-rise single and semi-detached neighbourhoods. It's the only path that's going to get us enough homes quick enough, and it happens to also be the only path that's really compatible with environmental sustainability.

Keep in mind that there never, during this government's time in office, has been any case to be made that more land would help increase housing output. There was already more than enough unbuilt farmland within settlement boundaries before 2022 to accommodate all southern Ontario's future homes and workplaces: more than 350 square kilometres in the GTHA alone. Housing output was and is being constrained by construction capacity and a

refusal to shift land use policies to make more efficient use of that capacity.

The combined effect of this legislation would be to move in the wrong direction entirely. It would drive the senseless destruction of large swaths of farmland and natural heritage that should and could be permanently protected. And, for fewer, more expensive homes, it would shift greenfield housing construction to lower densities, but also create a breeding ground for corruption.

We urge this committee not to exploit the long-overdue and helpful reform of getting rid of parking requirements in major transit station areas as a mere sugar coating for what is really a poison pill for both housing supply and the environment. In order to prevent that, we urge this committee to amend this draft bill as follows:

Firstly, delete in their entirety sections 4(4) and 5(6) of schedule 2, which, in combination with the new PPS and growth plan that are proposed, would allow agricultural landlords to force municipal governments to deal with requests for settlement boundary expansion at any time in an out-of-context, ad hoc basis.

We want you to delete in its entirety section 1(1), which would strip Halton, Peel and York region of their control over land use planning in those regions and thereby remove the kind of coordination that's really required in order to get the more efficient use of construction capacity that we need.

0910

And thirdly, insofar as we are keeping sections 3(1), 3(3) and 5(7) of schedule 12, which prevent third-party appeals of development proposals at all, they should be amended to apply only to decisions that directly or indirectly increase the number of units permitted within in the existing built-up areas of relevant municipalities. The pretext here is about dealing with NIMBYism—"not in my backyard"—and it makes no sense to control third-party appeals in places that are literally in no one's backyard, where the dynamic of people subjugating housing supply to their own views and shadows and their aesthetic ideas of their neighbourhood—that doesn't arise when what's being proposed is farmland development. That's the only reason for eliminating third-party appeals.

Eliminating third-party appeals in the context of greenfield development is a recipe, let's be clear, for corruption, because there is no more attractive environment for corruption than a case where a single decision by a lower-tier municipal government can transfer huge amounts of wealth to an individual. All that they need to do is get a few votes together to do that. If there is no scrutiny from—so, what this bill would do is remove Ontario Land Tribunal scrutiny from those most corruptogenic, corruption-prone decisions—

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Point of order, sir. I'm actually taking offence to the word "corruption."

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Order.

Mr. Phil Pothén: I'm asking you to prevent corruption. Let's be clear: Corruption is not, as people think—

Ms. Christine Hogarth: You keep saying it.

Mr. Phil Pothén: Yes. Well, I don't think that was a ruling against it. People say—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Let the presenter speak.

Mr. Phil Pothén: People like to pretend that corruption is a product of bad people or unethical people.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Mr. Phil Pothén: Really, corruption is a product of bad processes. Corruption happens whenever the light of day doesn't shine, whenever there's a process that doesn't put every part of the decision under public scrutiny, whenever there is nobody to check up on your decision and check whether it actually is justified, and that's what this bill would do: It would remove OLT oversight from those decisions, then you get corruption, and it doesn't matter how good you think you are. The thing that defines, distinguishes us from those other places where people think corruption is rampant is process. People in corruption-prone countries are not less ethical than we are; they just have processes like this one, which create corruption. So if you choose to approve this bill in this current form, you are choosing corruption and the onus is on you, not the individuals—well, as well as the individuals who respond to that in the future—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes the time of your presentation.

Our next presenter will be the George Brown College. I believe it's virtual. The floor is yours.

Ms. Michelle McCollum: [*Inaudible*] Michelle McCollum, vice-president of facilities and sustainability at George Brown College. I'm honoured to be with you today to discuss Bill 185 to speak to the urgent need for support for affordable student housing solutions and to offer our support for mass timber construction.

As a leading publicly accredited polytechnic institution, George Brown is making significant contributions to the vibrancy, productivity and prosperity of Ontario by supplying the workforce of today and tomorrow. We are very proud to represent over 20,000 full-time and over 30,000 part-time students across over 200 programs developed with industry for industry.

Our three major campuses are all within the city of Toronto, with over 4,000 employees across teaching faculty, support staff and administrators.

So today, I really want to take the time to talk about this bill and how it can positively impact our students and community members and talk about the importance of sustainability as we work together to provide solutions.

We're firstly focusing on our students. At George Brown, we're taking a leading role in exploring housing needs and opportunities in Canada's most expensive city. As the demand for housing really increases and continues to rise, student housing plays a crucial role in the overall housing plans for the province and in solving the issues that we have. Providing affordable and accessible housing options for students not only supports their academic success but also contributes to solving the broader housing shortage for our communities.

We've been undertaking extensive engagement with our students to understand the challenges that they're facing, and it's really important to note the diversity of our learners at George Brown and also in the college sector. While we do welcome many students just leaving high school, we also have many students who are entering our programs after other post-secondary education experiences and lifelong learners who may be adding to their skills or education or looking to change careers. As we work towards finding the solutions to housing supply and affordability, we need to consider those diverse needs. Our students may be parents, may be carers; they may be working multiple jobs. They have important commitments outside of their learning environments while they're studying.

We know that commute times are really long: Most of our students commute over an hour, and we have a rising number of students who commute over two hours both ways to get to and from campus. Learning and the important commitments they have outside of their studying—that's really challenging.

Collectively, how can we provide a range of solutions through our communities and institutions that provide options for the differing needs of our learners? At George Brown, we're actively pursuing opportunities to provide more housing solutions, and that's one of our key strategies, but it is really challenging. With higher interest rates and inflation, high construction costs, it's very hard to find solutions that will meet the needs of our students and be affordable and timely.

Our development sites are complex and current processes are not conducive to being able to deliver in short timelines, even if we do have the capital dollars. It becomes even more challenging in situations where we do have to explore public-private partnerships. But by working together, I am confident that we can find solutions, and we would be delighted to help explore what that could look like.

We also believe that these solutions need to be sustainable, and I'd like to talk a bit about that. At George Brown, we're really leading the way in terms of mass timber construction through our Brookfield Sustainability Institute and also in our latest construction project, Limberlost Place, which is currently under construction. Mass timber is crucial for the future of sustainable development in Ontario and for the future of our construction industry.

Limberlost Place is Ontario's first 10-storey mass timber, institutional use, net-zero-carbon-emission building. We've already won over 20 awards, and we've not even opened yet; that's planned for next year. It's a learning lab for students and industry: unprecedented construction techniques, and all mass timber components sourced from sustainably managed Canadian forests. We have led the way in building code innovation. We have served as a demonstration project for de-risking and proof of concept to advance mass timber building technology.

We are really proud to lead the way for the use of sustainable construction, and we deeply appreciate the government's support in ensuring this continues to transform our construction industry. We thank Minister Calandra

for visiting Limberlost Place and also thank Minister Smith for partnering with us to host an industry round table in the fall of 2023.

In closing, we welcome Bill 185 as an important step in the right direction. I encourage you to continue to partner with us and our sector in considering how we can support our learners and communities by providing affordable housing solutions. By leveraging the expertise and resources of educational institutions like George Brown College, together we can continue to drive innovation, promote sustainability and build a brighter future for all of the residents in our province.

Thank you so much for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for the presentation.

Now we will start the first round of questions. We'll start with the official opposition. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to all three of you for coming in and presenting today. I have questions for each of you.

I would like to start with Phil Pothen from Environmental Defence. Thank you for expressing your concerns about the risk for increased corruption if the OLT does not have the oversight that it needs to have over land use planning decisions. Can you just clarify for me what your vote recommendations are? What would you like to see the government and all parties vote against, and what proposed amendments would you like to see added?

Mr. Phil Pothen: We're asking this committee to vote to reject the bill overall unless it deletes section 1(1) in its entirety. That is the section that would strip Halton region, Peel region and York region of their control over land use planning.

0920

We'd ask you to delete in their entirety sections 4(4) and 5(6) of schedule 2, which, in combination with the growth plan and PPS removal, would allow agricultural landowners to force municipal governments to deal with requests for settlement boundary expansions at any time and thus cause ad hoc decision-making and prevent efficient use of construction capacity.

Thirdly, if sections 3(1), 3(3) and 5(7) of schedule 2 are retained, we want it to be scoped down to apply only to decisions to approve development within existing neighbourhoods and built-up areas that increase the number of units permitted on an existing residential lot or an existing developed lot. It should exclude expressly from the right of appeal decisions about settlement boundary expansion and decisions to approve greenfield development, because those do not raise the process concerns that really underline the need for this. This is not a case where the decision-making or the community body that's engaged excludes the party that would benefit.

In an existing neighbourhood, what you have is decisions about planning being made by a group of people that includes everyone who thinks they might suffer some downside from the development but excludes the prospective residents, who might not even live in the country yet and who certainly don't know that they'll be living in

that building, from that decision as well. So it's not a level at which democratic local decision-making can really happen. Whereas, with greenfield development, there's perfect alignment between both the costs and the benefits. Anybody who would potentially live in the housing—if they're in the region, they're available to make the decision, and also the environmental effects are dealt with, so that makes much more sense to deal with at a higher level of decision-making. There isn't a need to get rid of that intensive process or to deny third-party appeals. Third-party appeals in those cases would be broader public interest NGOs, not private interests opposed to the public. For example, it would be us, and we don't have any stake—I don't own a house in the outskirts of Halton region; we have a concern about the broader environmental impacts for all of Ontario. That's an appropriate place for third-party appeals to happen.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. I appreciate that.

The second question I have is to Ms. Fazilat from McMaster University—I have a few questions, and I'm just going to ask them all at once and you can answer.

(1) How much does a dorm room cost for a student for a student year?

(2) When Colleges Ontario came in, they said that the Planning Act does not apply to public-assisted universities and colleges already. I was wanting to know, since it doesn't already apply, how does that removal help you?

Ms. Saher Fazilat: They do not apply to colleges, but they do apply to universities. That's the difference. That's why, as a university, we're speaking in favour of this bill.

In terms of dorm rooms, as I mentioned in my opening remarks and my comments, if we build and operate a dorm room, we do an eight-month lease and we do it much cheaper. However, even when we go into public-private partnerships, we do it about 20% cheaper than the market.

For example, we've opened a grad residence downtown, and that is costing \$1,325 per bed, but that includes everything—utilities, Internet and whatnot—whereas an apartment in downtown Hamilton is close to \$1,700, \$1,800.

On the undergraduate residences that we built and are on campus, we have about 4,400 beds. They vary between \$800 to \$1,100 on an eight-month lease. However, both of these buildings have full student support systems available. Again, it comes with everything that gets offered on campus. It is definitely a little bit pricier when we go out for private money, but still much cheaper than what the market offers.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. So just to clarify, with the \$1,325 per bed a month, that includes food and additional services, or is that added on? I'm assuming it's added on.

Ms. Saher Fazilat: That's added, but that's for a graduate residence. The ones on campus are \$800 to \$1,100, depending on if it's a shared accommodation or a single accommodation.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. Just to clarify, then, on top of that, there's additional things you can buy into, such as a food plan, or is that included?

Ms. Saher Fazilat: There's a meal plan that is dictated by the CRA, and the limit is established by a CRA threshold.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Ms. Saher Fazilat: That is a plan that you can use to buy food and you can take it over to the next year or next year. So again, there is that flexibility in there, but yes, the meal plan is separate from the housing accommodation.

Now, I also wanted to add that the operating funds don't pay for building these residences. The residences have to pay, over a period of time, the cost of building the residence, even on campus, because they're ancillary services.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. I've run out of time; I apologize. But I look forward to reading your submissions and if I have any follow-up questions, I will be calling you directly.

Ms. Saher Fazilat: Absolutely, happy to. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. We'll now go to the independent, MPP Hazell.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Good morning, everyone, and thank you for coming in and making your presentations to this committee.

I'm going to start off with McMaster University on the first round, and I will get to the others on my second round. Saher Fazilat—I hope I pronounced that right—really, thank you for detailing your gaps, your challenges, your issues here to us. I hear you, and we also know that Ontario has the lowest per capita funding for universities in any province. We know this will impact the ability of universities to achieve a wide array of objectives, as you stated. And I also hear a lot about budget pressures and funding issues.

But despite the easing of the planning regulations for universities under this act, I want you to tell me, did it really impact you building affordable homes for your students? And then, do you anticipate that it will be feasible for your institution to just build enough homes for your students? Because we know it's almost a crisis right now. So I will give you my time to elaborate on those couple of questions that I put in between there.

Ms. Saher Fazilat: Absolutely. As I mentioned in my remarks—and I have actually built a lot of buildings in my earlier career across southern Ontario—the cost of delay in permit processing, in going through the Planning Act, the cost of escalation for construction while we're waiting for permit processes and Planning Acts when we are actually operating within our boundaries that already have these buildings in place is always costly. I mean, I gave you an example where we started talking in 2017, and we ended up putting in a shovel just six months back. So definitely, the cost of construction grows with time and the time that is spent by resources, which is kind of considered intangible, can all be spent on building projects that are very timely, can be on time, on budget. Definitely, finding other ways of supporting building these residences would be very helpful.

Now, to your question: Will it be sufficient? Yes. We have about 4,400 beds right now. We have done a demand study around the campus and it is about 8,000 needed

beds. We're adding another 2,800 beds to our system here. A survey of all Ontario universities said that the total of Ontario universities are building about 9,000 beds, and of that, 33% are being built here at McMaster. So again, we're reaching our goal and target. Can we build more and accommodate more students and bring them? Absolutely. Again, it's a balancing act. But definitely these changes will help us expedite and have more dollars to spare and build a little bit more.

0930

MPP Andrea Hazell: Thank you for putting that on the record.

I want to go with the little bit of time I have—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

MPP Andrea Hazell: You've mentioned—Phil?

Mr. Phil Pothen: Yes.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Phil, you've mentioned a term that I've never heard before, so if you could take that couple of minutes and I'll come back to you in my next round. You mentioned environmental racism. Can you elaborate further for me on that statement?

Mr. Phil Pothen: Sure. Environmental racism, fundamentally, is about disproportionately adverse effects on racialized groups. If you have a policy or a state of affairs which results—even if it's completely unintentional and has nothing to do with the purpose of the policy—in less environmental benefits being given to particular racialized groups in practice, or more benefits being given to non-racialized groups or particular groups, relatively speaking, then that's environmental racism. One of the obvious ways that this has manifested is, in a country like Canada, where income is still very much—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the time.

We'll now go to the government. MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to all the presenters that are here today, virtually and in person.

I did want to focus my comments initially around McMaster. I know you've been getting a lot of airtime this morning, but I think it's important because when we look at some of the provisions of this bill and what they're going to do to be able to help student housing be built at universities, I think it's very important. I know George Brown, obviously, has a lot of these provisions as a college already.

I did want to just start with McMaster and get a little bit more of a feeling as far as the planning process goes and how long it takes you to actually build student housing. You had mentioned in your opening remarks that it had taken almost a decade to get a project complete, and quite frankly, that's too long. Regardless of whether there's a housing crisis or not, 10 years to build student dormitories is far too long.

Could you walk us through a little bit of that process of the last building or residence you have built and how, again, you feel that this bill can help streamline some of those, quite frankly, pieces of red tape?

Ms. Saher Fazilat: Thank you very much. Through you, Chair, as I said in my opening remarks, it took us six

and a half years just to get a permit and it will take 30 months to build the building: a 1,400-bedded residence, which is our largest offering. Normally, we have 300, up to 600. Normally, we offer those kinds of beds. This is a 1,400-bedded residence.

We will build it in 30 months. However, it took us six and a half years to actually reach the point of putting the shovel in the ground, and that's quite unacceptable in the sense of not only the time and effort that went in in getting there, and also the cost escalation. We all know what the cost per square foot was in 2017 and what the cost per square foot is today. Year over year, the construction industry has seen a 30% uptick in the last three years in terms of construction costs. So again, a huge lost opportunity there by waiting for the planning processes to play through.

Mr. Mike Harris: The planning process that you had to go through in that six and a half years, can you tell us what some of the major hurdles were and why? Why did it take so long?

Ms. Saher Fazilat: I joined McMaster in 2021, but I can relay what my predecessor told me and some of the documents that I've seen. There were challenges with the development charges. I know many Ontario universities were exempt from development charges, but some still had to pay development charges up until 2020. The recognition of the residence as a school-owned and -operated entity was challenged. Then there were permitting challenges—we had to go through the Planning Act.

Many of those things that could have been easily avoided were being worked on both sides and resources were spent on both sides, which unnecessarily added to the time and effort. Again, neither side is to be blamed in this, I think. It's more on the process side that needs to be cleaned up.

Mr. Mike Harris: I want to flip over to George Brown for a second because you already have provisions in your statutes where you are already exempt from much of the municipal planning process and adjacent pieces of red tape. I'm just wondering if you might be able to comment on some of the residences that George Brown has put together over the last couple of years and how that process has gone. I'm wondering if it's been a little bit smoother than what you've heard so far from the folks from McMaster.

Ms. Michelle McCollum: Thanks so much for the question. George Brown currently just has one residence. We have 500 beds. Our residence was previously the Pan Am athletes' village, so that really was a partnership project.

I have to tell you that the provisions that are there for colleges to leverage as part of the crown is actually something that we've not frequently used, and I'll explain why. Irrespective of whether we go through a building permit process, we still have to comply with the building code. So that means that we still have to ensure that we have code consultants on board. It's a complex process. There are liability issues there.

Certainly, from a planning provision, there are important aspects within the Planning Act. There are important protections that we have to make for our communities,

things like flooding and things like that, that we have to think about with our conservation authorities.

I agree with Saher that the process is the issue. The combination of the different levels of government, the process that you have to go through—that creates the problem. The actual part of the pieces of the Planning Act in legislation are there for a good reason, but we have to figure out a way of really shortening the process but still protecting the important pieces of that development process.

Mr. Mike Harris: How much time, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One point four.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'll turn it over to one of my colleagues. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: My very brief question, which we can probably come back to in the second round, is for George Brown. You mentioned in your remarks around mass timber—and I know our government has made some changes around that with the building code to 18 storeys. Can you just explain a little more about your experiences in particular with mass timber? I know from our perspective in the government, we really think it's an innovative solution and offers an opportunity for home builders across Ontario.

Ms. Michelle McCollum: Yes, definitely. Though the Chair, thank you so much for the question.

Mass timber, really—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Ms. Michelle McCollum:—we're very excited by our 10-storey institutional building. We're delighted to see the government pushing to 18 storeys. I think it's very transformative.

Mass timber really is an amazing form of modular construction. What that offers is speed. There are efficiencies. We're feeding back into our research and development through our construction process into the construction industry, so the whole sector can learn from what we're doing at George Brown.

Certainly, as we're thinking about future developments, housing, mass timber is lightweight and can be faster. The amount of embodied carbon, certainly within our building, is over 2,300 cars a year off the road equivalent per year, every year, by our one building. So it shows you just the difference that this can make—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

We'll now go to the official opposition. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to Michelle McCollum from George Brown College. I was really interested in what you had to say about the work you are doing with mass timber. The first question I have is, can you just give me a bit of a summary around what amount of student housing you have and what is the amount of student housing that you plan on building?

Ms. Michelle McCollum: Through you, Mr. Chair, we currently have just over 500 beds. Traditionally, student housing was not as prevalent in the college system as it is in the university sector. We have less high school leavers,

so our average age is around 24 years old. That's our average student age, so the housing needs are different.

However, we know that we currently have a waiting list of over 500 students looking for a bed in Toronto. Our price point—we have individual rooms. They're around \$1,300 a month, and those are leased on a per-semester basis. We know we need to add more housing. Development sites in Toronto are difficult. We do have ownership of several key institutional sites, but those are all brown-field sites that currently have academic operations and would be difficult to develop. That said, with low-weight mass timber, there are opportunities to think about height and to think about density on some of our existing campuses.

0940

We do want to increase. We're actively looking at solutions and opportunities just now. We know we need multiple, but we want to add many hundreds of more beds. We recognize that solving the housing affordability and availability issues for our students really contributes to the broader community, as we then have less students who are looking and competing with other people looking for housing solutions in the city.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I've got one more quick question, so I'd appreciate if you could answer it briefly. When Colleges Ontario came in, they talked about how one of the challenges they have is that they're not able to easily access financing to build new projects. They recommended that there were some changes to Ontario legislation to make it easier for them to leverage financing to get the capital they need to start a project. Is that something that George Brown is also experiencing and would be recommending?

Ms. Michelle McCollum: Yes, absolutely. As part of the 24 colleges of Ontario, we are limited with where we can borrow money from the province, so the latest announcement about federal opportunities—we are limited. We could not do that the way the legislation currently stands.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that. I appreciate your time.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to all presenters: Saher, Phil and Michelle. I appreciate your time and expertise that you're sharing with us this morning.

Phil, in schedule 12 of Bill 185, the Planning Act—an unproclaimed section of Bill 23 eliminated the planning responsibilities for Halton, Peel, York, Simcoe, Durham, Niagara and Waterloo. Bill 185 allows for this provision to come into force for Halton, Peel and York no later than this July, but for each of the other affected upper-tier municipalities, the provision comes into force upon proclamation.

There are huge concerns around this in Waterloo region. I know that you know this, but unlike most Ontario cities and communities, we have no greenbelt protections—this can be corrected—and no freshwater pipelines to the Great Lakes, so we're totally dependent on living within the care and capacity of our watersheds. Waterloo region has

developed robust planning practice processes and tools and environmental protections, which find that balance—because we have a countryside line around our region—between farmland, urban development and preventing sprawl.

I wanted to give you an opportunity to talk about how dangerous this can be when there is no comprehensive or coordinated planning process at the upper level where those lower-tier municipalities could have a detrimental impact on water recharge and on planning processes.

Mr. Phil Pothén: Certainly. It's really important to remember that effects on watershed and effects on flooding often are cumulative, which means that you cannot look at an individual applicant's settlement boundary expansion request and say, "Oh, we know that this will be okay," unless you know which other requests you're going to say yes to and which other ones you're going to say no to. You can't identify what location is the best place that will have the minimum adverse effect.

This system which this legislation would propose does not allow a municipality to say, "Okay, if we build here, we'll be able to get the same number of homes without causing flooding, so let's not approve in these other locations." There's no mechanism for that kind of decision to happen here. As a result, you can end up both causing flooding inadvertently because of cumulative effect and major environmental harm—you could end up wiping out all the habitat for a particular species—but you can also sterilize or sacrifice a lot of housing because the first two applicants out the door were in the less optimal locations and now there's no more capacity left for the third applicant.

So this is a recipe that's partly the individual applications allowing extension of the settlement boundary at any time, but it's also lower-tier municipalities, because the best place in a region is not always within your lower-tier municipality. For example, in Halton region, it makes much more sense to put housing in existing neighbourhoods of Oakville and Burlington and not in greenfield areas in Milton and Halton Hills.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Do you think that people understand how costly sprawl is? Of course, the government is trying to make a case that we have to build these homes outside of pre-approved boundaries on environmentally sensitive land and on farmland. Do you think that people who live in existing homes in those communities understand how much it's going to cost them to move ahead with those plans?

Mr. Phil Pothén: I think, more and more, they're starting to understand. But the problem is, we're creating a system where they can't know the relationship between their decision about allowing housing in their neighbourhood and the sprawl that happens. So, by delegating this to lower-tier municipalities or farming it out to lower-tier municipalities, you take away the ability of someone in Oakville to say, "Okay, I can stop that costly sprawl from happening by saying yes to housing in my—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much.

We now go to the independent. MPP Hazell.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Phil, I'm going to question with you. The last question I asked was, for the record, to detail the environmental racism statement. You started; you didn't finish. Can you finish that? And then I have another question for you.

Mr. Phil Pothén: All right. In our current system, the most sought-after neighbourhoods are restricted in the type of housing that they can build. So the neighbourhoods closest to where we are now, if you have a single-family-detached neighbourhood and you can't build denser housing, you'll see very clearly that those become the neighbourhoods where racialized people are disproportionately excluded, because we still have unequal distribution of income right now across Canada. So if you don't allow denser housing in existing neighbourhoods, you end up excluding, disproportionately, certain racialized communities from those neighbourhoods.

Secondly, by putting the housing—basically, we're saying, "We're not putting it in existing neighbourhoods"—what you're effectively doing is that you're effectively exiling, disproportionately, newcomers to farm fields on the outskirts rather than making room for them in the most desirable existing neighbourhood.

There should be no street that does not have a place for everyone of any income. It should not be the case that being a newcomer means you have to pick a certain neighbourhood because the better neighbourhoods are off limits to you. That's not an acceptable state of affairs in a society that doesn't want to be racist. You have to allow the forms of housing—unless you want to unilaterally level income in one shot, which we haven't done, that means that you have to ensure that income doesn't determine what neighbourhood you can live in, so that access to tree streets and good transit access is available to people regardless of income. Affluent streets should not be able to say no to a fourplex. It should not be able to say no to a mid-rise building.

The good news is, Toronto is doing the right things now. Toronto is starting to allow six-storey mid-rise buildings using wood frame construction. That directly is the same construction capacity, the same trades, that build low-rise housing. And each and every home that would get built using sprawl as a result of this development is coming at the expense of that housing in existing neighbourhoods, because they're competing head to head for the same trades.

What we really need to do is legalize the fourplex in this legislation, put that back in; get rid of prohibitions on mid-rise up to six storeys—look at what Toronto is doing and make that an as-of-right, universal policy across existing neighbourhoods; and slam the breaks on any further boundary expansion, rather than making it easy and rigging the system—

MPP Andrea Hazell: Yes. I want to add a second question.

We know that this government is doubling down on their pro-sprawl ideology with this legislation. I'm talking about the impact it has on the environment and especially the sprawl. That's an issue.

In your words, can you articulate to me why this is a wrong approach? Even their own Housing Affordability Task Force has said that in their report as well.

Mr. Phil Pothen: The government's Housing Affordability Task Force, RBC, the rate report—they all say that, both for the environment but also just for plain housing supply, we have to shift the type of housing we build to denser housing types, rather than low-density housing types. We have to shift housing to existing neighbourhoods.

0950

When we build sprawl—and that means when we build on greenfield when we could be building in existing neighbourhoods and when we build at densities less than 100 people per hectare—we aren't just unnecessarily destroying farmland and natural heritage; we are also locking in, over the long term, much higher greenhouse gas emissions for each and every one of those people.

There is a manyfold change in carbon emissions if someone lives in an existing neighbourhood here in Toronto in a denser form of housing, and then that multiplies many times over if you don't accommodate them in the existing neighbourhood and you push them into greenfield development. You're locking that in over many years. You're creating car trips that wouldn't happen otherwise. That means that, essentially, we're tipping species at risk over the line into the direction that leads to extinction, and we're also really making it—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

We now go to MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Respectfully, I would disagree with some of the comments from Environmental Defence. I believe rural Ontario is a very beautiful place to live, and I know you would agree as well, Chair, and for our new Canadians as well. Many new Canadians are coming to my part of the world as well, which is wonderful to see.

My question for George Brown—I know we had our time cut there. I just want to go back to the 18-storey mass timber aspect around that. I was wondering if you could elaborate on—we're talking about the innovative techniques, but also the environmental impacts. You briefly mentioned it at the end of your remarks there. I just wondered if you could expand a bit on that.

Ms. Michelle McCollum: There are a number of other technologies we're using at Limberlost which are contributing to it being a net-zero-emissions building. That includes deep lake water cooling. It also includes operable windows. It's on a district energy network.

But going back to the mass timber: Because the highest causes of GHG emissions in the construction industry are through concrete and steel, we need to minimize the amount of concrete and steel that we use. It's very difficult at the moment to not use any. There are still some structural elements that do require, in a high-rise, some

concrete and steel elements. But we can dramatically change the GHG emissions and provide the opportunity for carbon capture through mass timber. The more that we can adapt developments to mass timber technologies, the more that we can do that and make that happen across Ontario.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Great, thank you.

I defer my time to MPP Anand.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Anand.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to my colleague for that question, and I want to continue that conversation.

I want to start with the university, McMaster. Saher, nice to see you. Thank you for coming. Quickly, I'm not as young as my colleague Matthew—he always talks about it—but I do have young children and both of my kids are in university. One of the challenges we faced: Housing is great, but the meal plan is very expensive, and it's required, especially for the first-year students.

Talking about how, in this bill, universities, like colleges, would no longer be subject to municipal planning approvals, which would save years in approvals, avoid application fees and remove barriers to building higher-density student residences—put everything together, it's going to reduce your cost of building and operating, which means you have a lower cost. How will that help the students? Will that savings be passed on back to the students?

Ms. Saher Fazilat: Absolutely. As you heard me say earlier on—and through you, Mr. Chair; thank you for the good question—I have university-going kids as well, and we understand what you're talking through.

The meal plan, very quickly—the limit is set by the CRA. I know we're talking about housing here today, so I'll stick to your question.

As you heard us say, when we build the residences ourselves, we can offer it much cheaper. When we have to go for private dollars, they definitely are cheaper than the market, but not as cheap as what we do here on-campus or when we build the building ourselves on our own properties. Definitely, it is a very, very well-defined process of setting those phases based on the cost incurred, the time gained in not having a process through. So very, very precisely answering your question: If we have the money to build it ourselves, we will build it faster, cheaper and the cost wouldn't be passed on to the students. We're not in the business of a bottom line here.

Mr. Deepak Anand: You briefly touched on the meal plan, so I would like to talk about the meal plan. We did have a conversation with another college or university—I don't remember the name—and they actually said they are making it optional going forward. How is it possible that they're able to do it and you're not able to do it?

Ms. Saher Fazilat: The optional means that it then gets more expensive for those who want the plan. What we have done this year is—we used to be only one year locked in—we have said you can use it year over year, so you don't have to lock it in in one year. There is a minimum CRA threshold. McMaster has always been on the lower quartile of our meal plan. Each university sets it different-

ly. We have said you can use it year over year rather than just locking it in again.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I just want to say this government is all about more choices and transparency, and this is why I think it is better if you can go back, take a look at it and help the students, especially those who can't afford it.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Barnes.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: I'll direct my questions to both the university and college, if you can weigh in.

We have talked about constructing student housing. You've talked about two of the things that have been barriers in regard to—one of the things that we're removing here, the planning piece around getting house to market, as well as the financing portion that creates barriers.

My other question: Is there something else that creates a barrier for colleges and universities to build that you'd like to put on the table today?

I'll start with George Brown.

Ms. Michelle McCollum: Thank you very much for the question. I think there are various pieces in the planning. Really, it's about planning and it's about financing, but it's also about understanding the broader needs of our students. It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a whole community to be able to support our students. So, thinking more holistically, our campus is the community; the community is our campus. If we're solving the broader community problems, we're also solving the issues for our students.

Housing affordability, particularly in Toronto, really is impacting everyone, so the more we can do to collectively work to resolve that issue, the more that we're helping our students as well as our broader community.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Thank you.

McMaster?

Ms. Saher Fazilat: Michelle nailed it down—it's the same thing.

Obviously, financing—universities are able to raise debts and get financing; however, that affects their credit rating, and the market is really very expensive to raise. So capital and time of build, leading to shovel in the ground, are the two biggest barriers. If we have money and if we a shorter process, we will continue to commit to build more and house as many students as need to be housed on campuses. So that would be our take on this.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the time for that question. It also concludes the time for the panel.

We thank all the presenters this morning for the great job of presenting and taking the time to prepare to present it.

With that, the committee is now recessed until 4 this afternoon.

The committee recessed from 1001 to 1600.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Good afternoon and welcome back. We will now resume public hearings on Bill 185, An Act to amend various Acts.

As a reminder, each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation. After we have heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will

be for questions from members of the committee. This time for questions will be divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent member.

ONTARIO LONG TERM
CARE ASSOCIATION
NO DEMOVICTIONS

REFORM GRAVEL MINING COALITION

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): With that, we will now ask the first panel to come forward. I believe we have Ontario Long Term Care Association and I believe they are on virtual, No Demovictions and I believe they're here, and Reform Gravel Mining Coalition. Come forward. As I mentioned, there will be seven minutes for the presentation. At six minutes, I will say, "One minute." Don't stop, because the punchline goes from six to seven minutes. At seven minutes, I will say, "Thank you," and I will be on the move, so that will be the end of the presentation. We do ask each one, as you make your presentation or if there's someone else that's going to speak, to introduce themselves before they make comments to make sure we can attribute the presentations to the appropriate person.

With that, the first one is the Ontario Long Term Care Association, and the floor is now yours.

Mr. Chris Pugh: Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Chris Pugh and I'm the director of policy and quality at the Ontario Long Term Care Home Association. The OLTHCA represents 70% of Ontario's long-term-care homes, including non-profit, charitable, private, municipal and First Nation homes in communities across the province. Today, I just want to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act. This bill includes important measures that will help build more homes faster, including long-term-care homes.

The government's commitment to one and a half million new houses by 2031 is critical to supporting our growing and changing population. Ontarians are aging quickly. In fact, those over 80 are increasing by nearly four times the rate of the rest of the population. By 2040, the number of Ontarians over 80 will nearly double what they are today.

Many will be able to age in the home they own or move into apartments or retirement or seniors' communities. But for about 20%, or one in five, of those over 80, they will have complex needs that can only provided for in long-term care. These are individuals living with things like advanced dementia or significant mobility and care needs.

Increasingly, those who move into long-term care today do so from hospital, often following a health care crisis. This crisis often means these seniors can no longer manage their needs in their house or apartment. These same Ontarians also often have family members, caregivers and friends who are supporting their care. As we know, these

caregivers are often themselves overwhelmed and burnt out.

Long-term care, then, provides high-quality care and a place to live well for those who need it most, and it is our duty to ensure that care is there for them. Today, 43,000 people are waiting for one of the 76,000 long-term-care spaces in the province. This need will continue to grow.

The government has made historic commitments to support the building of 30,000 new long-term-care spaces and modernize the province's oldest homes, which contain 28,000 spaces. No other jurisdiction has made this level of substantive investment in building a high-quality, safe, modern long-term-care and seniors' care system. These commitments are critical to ensuring our seniors have the care that they need in their local community.

Additionally, while long-term-care homes provide care, they are first and foremost a home for the people who live there, and an important source of accessible, affordable housing for seniors with complex care needs, right within their communities. Long-term-care team members work every day to provide high-quality clinical care. They also support residents in living out lives that bring meaning and dignity. In long-term care, our homes specialize in helping people live well and focus on what matters most to them.

Long-term care sits on a continuum of housing and care. For some, staying in their single-family home with home care supports will be enough for their aging needs. Some will need more care and will need other housing settings to match those needs, from naturally occurring retirement communities in apartment buildings, to purpose-built retirement and assisted-living communities, to long-term care. The important part of this, and what we see as important in the government's housing targets, is ensuring our seniors have access to housing and care within the communities they know. These are the communities where they raised their children, where they worked and are still leaders, and where they can continue to participate as much as they're able.

Bill 185 is an important part of ensuring our seniors have appropriate, affordable housing where they live, and it is why the government has included long-term care in its housing commitment targets. But long-term-care home development is particularly complicated, involving multiple layers of government. It can take three to five years from an application to the opening of a long-term-care home if all goes smoothly.

There are, however, many roadblocks that can significantly delay or derail projects. A number of the measures proposed in Bill 185 will help make navigating long-term-care development more efficient and will prioritize long-term-care projects to ensure that homes can be built quicker and collaboratively across levels of government. Bill 185 provides important tools to meet the government's long-term-care commitments and ensure long-term care will be there for those who need it most.

In Bill 185, the government has also added provisions to support municipalities with process improvements and expanding the infrastructure that will encourage housing starts, such as the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund,

the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program and the Building Faster Fund. Any investments in stronger municipal infrastructure and expediting processes will support more housing for our seniors, and that includes long-term care.

Additionally, attainable housing is crucial for our growing workforce. In many communities, especially rural communities, a lack of housing is a factor in health care staff recruitment and retention. Bill 185 would also enable expedited approvals for community service facilities. The government said this will first start with schools, but we hope additionally long-term-care homes will follow soon after. And the bill's measures to improve access to land, particularly in urban areas where land is difficult to obtain, will be critical to achieving the government's housing and long-term-care targets.

In closing, I would like to emphasize the importance of the measures in Bill 185. This bill is an important step to enabling long-term-care homes to be built as quickly as possible, to modernize our long-term-care system to meet our significant demographic challenges and to ensure Ontario's seniors have access to care in their communities where and when they need it most.

Thank you for your time. I welcome your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for that presentation.

We now will go to the No Demovictions.

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: Hello, committee members. My name is Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant. I'm joined virtually by Lindsay Blackwell and by David Steinman. We are here to speak on behalf of No Demovictions. So for any who don't know who we are, we are a tenant-led coalition who fights for affordable housing and for community-led development. But we are against profit-driven development.

We are in favour of some of the proposed changes in this bill, and one is an amendment to the Development Charges Act, 1997, reinstating studies as eligible costs to be recovered from DC revenues. Another is an amendment to the City of Toronto Act, 2006, eliminating the application fee refunds introduced in Bill 109.

There are, however, proposed changes that are aimed at speeding up development but that we find problematic. So, first and foremost, the removal of third-party appeals at the Ontario Land Tribunal opens the door to potential conflicts of interest within municipal governments while silencing the voices of the people they represent. We request the right for all third-party appeals to be protected.

Like the city of Toronto, we are also opposed to the enabling of greenfield development amendment as its potential negative impacts include the loss of permeable lands, agricultural lands and natural spaces, additional regional congestion, negative economic impacts and increased risks of downstream impacts on municipalities.

To quote Councillor Perks, this is the "enrich every land speculator" act. There are thousands of plots of land in the greater Toronto area that suddenly on paper are worth more money overnight, including lands that protect the Don River, the Humber River and our farmers. This is

literally about land speculation. This has nothing to do with housing.

Moving on to the Planning Act, a new subsection states that official plans no longer need to include parking facilities within protected major transit areas. We are strongly in favour of reducing emissions and reducing personal vehicles on the road. Most of the tenants that we represent don't own cars. They have no interest in owning a car. However, this subsection effectively discriminates against an entire segment of the community, raising the question, for whom are we building housing? You may not be aware, but some of the people who live in downtown Toronto, as an example, who require parking, either their own or visitors', are people with accessibility issues, people who require care from personal support workers or visiting family members, people who run small businesses and people who require a vehicle for their employment. These are all people who will not be able to live in these buildings. The most common rebuttal we hear is that such people should use public transit, including Wheel-Trans, as well as car-share services, taxis and Uber and Lyft drivers—who, by the way, are themselves people who require a vehicle for their employment. Unfortunately, for anyone who has to rely on those services, they are either not well maintained to grossly underfunded, not accessible or more costly than owning a personal vehicle. If you would like examples on any of these points, we would be happy to share them.

Currently, the city of Toronto does not require new developments to include parking. This leads to cases such as 25 St. Mary, which is the largest fully occupied purpose-built rental building approved for demoviction so far. It's going to see all of its parking disappear in the new development. This parking erasure is essentially a type of full-on eviction for many seniors, tenants with accessibility issues, including those on ODSP, and some workers. It's a really great way for developers to incentivize tenants to not return to their entitled replacement unit.

No Demovictions recommends that there is a required minimum parking, including accessible and visitors' parking, in proportion to the units of new developments. We also want there to be a requirement to replace all current, existing parking in all rental buildings being redeveloped and for returning tenants to have the right of first refusal on the replacement parking.

We also want to see increased funding to public transit across municipalities. In Toronto, that would be the TTC and Wheel-Trans.

Also, eliminating parking is often spoken of under the umbrella of reducing emissions and creating more 15-minute walkable cities, but we can't ignore the fact that developers welcome this in the interest of reducing their costs. The problem is that this will even further incentivize developers to target lands along main transit lines, like the subway line, which is where the highest density already exists and where most purpose-built rental buildings are currently standing.

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No Demovictions, we do advocate for more housing along the main transit routes, but not at the cost of massive tenant displacement without adequate protections in place. We strongly recommend that the province make an amendment to ensure that all tenants receive adequate protections, similar to what eligible tenants receive at the tenant relocation assistance plan with the city of Toronto, and we would be happy to discuss in greater detail what those protections would look like.

There is also an amendment to expand a municipality's ability to address the allocations of housing-enabling infrastructure, also known as "use it or lose it." No Demovictions is generally supportive of this measure insofar as it can help mitigate against rampant land speculation.

The city of Toronto reports that, since 2005, 73% of development applications with notice of approval conditions have applied for a building permit within two years. That means that 27% did not, and tenants in those buildings are living with high levels of anxiety and uncertainty—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant:—in a state of limbo that can last for years and has been compared to psychological warfare. In my building, KingSett Capital indicated a timeline of anywhere between two to eight years before tenants would be affected, which is far too vague.

No Demovictions recommends the strengthening of provisions by shortening the time frame permitted for municipalities to enact conditions on developers who are not making headway on housing projects, especially where rental replacement units are required and where additional affordable housing is planned. We also request that the restricted timelines begin as soon as the rezoning and project applications are approved by the city, because there are too many cases where both applications are approved and the developers just sit on the land for an extended period of time.

We hope that you will take our recommendations into account, and we welcome further consultation.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): We now will go to the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition.

Ms. Katie Krelove: My name is Katie Krelove. I am a board member with the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition. We are a non-profit group that brings together resident groups that defend community health and safety and the environment from the devastating impacts of gravel mining in Ontario.

RGMC has the long-term goal of winning regulatory and legislative reforms to safeguard health, water and nature, ensure community participation in land use decision-making, and honour treaties and obligations with First Nations within aggregate mining in Ontario.

On behalf of RGMC, I want to voice our strong opposition to the proposed amendments to the Planning Act in schedule 12 of Bill 185 that would remove the public right to appeal the adoption and amendment of official plans and zoning bylaws to the Ontario Land Tribunal, the OLT.

Land use planning decisions can significantly impact local watersheds, air quality, access to natural spaces and the health and safety of communities. We urge the committee to maintain the long-standing appeal rights for the public to protect their communities' health and local environment from poorly conceived development applications.

The proposed amendments would limit appeals at the OLT to "specified persons," which is narrowly defined in section 1 of the Planning Act as an electric utility, Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, or any company in the municipality operating a natural gas utility, oil or natural gas pipeline, or telecommunications infrastructure. The amendments will mean that ratepayers' associations, local community groups and environmental organizations will be banned from appealing land use planning decisions to the OLT, even if they have participated in the municipality's decision-making process.

These proposed amendments would result in serious unfairness, as private developers maintain their rights to appeal. If a municipality does not accept an application for an official plan or zoning bylaw amendment, private developers may still appeal that decision to the OLT. However, if a municipality does approve a development application, even if the proposal is environmentally damaging or may cause public health impacts to the local community, the public would no longer be able to challenge the municipality's decision at the OLT.

There is no justification for this serious infringement on public rights. There is no evidence that third-party appeals are slowing down development in Ontario. Instead, there is evidence showing that third-party appeals are extremely rare, comprising approximately 0.5% of all appeals and only 0.25% of all contested hearings—hardly the red tape that the act claims to target. In fact, it is developers appealing the decisions of municipalities that make up the majority of OLT cases.

These amendments would exacerbate, as well, the unjust treatment of First Nations under the Planning Act by eliminating the right of appeal and leaving in place only the notice regulations that only give notice of decisions to "the chief of every First Nation council, if the First Nation is located on a reserve any part of which is within one kilometre of the area to which the proposed official plan or plan amendment would apply."

Many critical environmental achievements in Ontario's land use history are the direct result of third-party intervention at the OLT and its predecessors at the Ontario Municipal Board and Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. Some examples of community groups that successfully appealed to prevent or alter developments in environmentally significant and sensitive areas include Protecting Escarpment Rural Land in the Niagara Escarpment, Innisfil District Association in Lake Simcoe, Environmental Defence and Save the Rouge Valley System on the Oak Ridges moraine and greenbelt, and there are many more.

Indeed, many of the local community groups that the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition works with and supports

rely on their right to appeal municipal zoning changes at the OLT to raise legitimate concerns about the environmental health and safety impacts of proposed gravel pits and quarries in their neighbourhoods. These are people who care enough about their communities and the future of their communities to engage with the bureaucratic world of municipal zoning and planning decisions. They also, on many occasions, are required to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to hire lawyers and various environmental experts to advise them and testify at their appeals.

RGMC is also concerned that the proposed elimination of the public's appeal rights will have retroactive effect. Pursuant to sections 3(2), 3(4) and 5(8) of schedule 12, Bill 185 proposes to retroactively eliminate public appeals if hearings have not been scheduled by April 10, 2024. This may automatically terminate a significant number of public appeals. This will have a financial impact on members of the public who will have their appeals dismissed after having potentially spent significant resources on appeal filing fees and retaining experts and lawyers.

Overall, Bill 185's ban on third-party appeals is an unjustified benefit to developers at a significant cost to our democracy and the fair administration of justice, and undermines sustainable development efforts.

This is not the first time this government has proposed the removal of rights of citizens to appeal amendments to official plans and zoning. The same measure was proposed in Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act. That ban was ultimately removed at committee due to overwhelming testimony against it by environmental groups, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and others.

The Reform Gravel Mining Coalition asks the committee to do the same for Bill 185. We recommend removing sections 3(1), 3(3) and 5(7) of schedule 12, the sections that seek to—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Ms. Katie Krelove: —remove the public's ability to appeal the adoption of amendment of official plans and zoning bylaws. We also recommend the Attorney General should disclose all internal memoranda and external communications with municipalities and developers requesting the proposed change to third-party appeal rights.

I'm happy to answer questions.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the presentations. We will start the first round of questioning. I was going to start with the independents, but I guess we'll go to the government first. MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to the presenters, both virtually and in person, here this afternoon for your deputations.

My question is to Chris from the Ontario Long Term Care Association. Do you believe—and I think you alluded to it, but I just wanted to get that on the record for sure—a long-term-care home is a home?

Mr. Chris Pugh: Absolutely. A long-term-care home is a home. It's enshrined in our act. The first principle in the Fixing Long-Term Care Act is that long-term care is a home. It's a place where we strive to help people live well when they need it most.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you for that. Obviously, our government has issued a variety of MZOs to get long-term-care homes built. Has that been beneficial, in your opinion, representing the association, to get those projects started?

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Mr. Chris Pugh: Absolutely. I think this government has done a significant amount of work—I've explained that the process is really complicated—to help navigate that process and help long-term-care homes get moving, and I think, particularly, the changes to MZOs will be significantly helpful in moving even more projects forward.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate—I know you briefly mentioned in your remarks on the need to expedite some of the approvals in the process and some of the delays some of your members may have experienced across Ontario.

Mr. Chris Pugh: Yes, absolutely. We've highlighted it, but it does take about three to five years to get through the process right now to build a long-term-care home in Ontario. That's if the process goes well. It's because our homes are navigating multiple levels of government. We're working off of our own ministry to achieve approvals, working with our local planning in our municipalities, as well as our homes need to secure financing to support that project.

So what we see is that our long-term-care projects are taking longer and longer. But thanks to this government's investment and movements forward and changing things through things like Bill 185, we've seen more homes start that process of breaking ground. Sixty-seven homes have broken ground since April 2022. That's almost 10,000 new spaces. So we're seeing ourselves moving forward, and Bill 185 will help expedite it even more.

Mr. Matthew Rae: So, just to confirm, that's 10,000 new spaces or new homes?

Mr. Chris Pugh: New spaces.

Mr. Matthew Rae: New spaces since 2022?

Mr. Chris Pugh: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Okay, wow. That's very impressive. Chris, I thank you and your members for that.

Chair, I defer the remaining time in this session to my colleague.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Triantafilopoulos

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Chair, and thank you as well to all the presenters for being with us today. I also would like to pursue some more questions with Chris from the Ontario Long Term Care Association.

I had the privilege of being the parliamentary assistant for long-term care for several years, so I'm very, very familiar with many of the great work that your association and others have done. I wanted to just mention, for the record, when our government first got elected in 2018, we had inherited, in fact, a situation where virtually no long-term-care homes had been built in the previous eight years under the previous government. I believe the number was 611 net new beds in the entire province. I can say, very

safely, that in my community of Oakville North-Burlington, we already have over 1,200 new beds in our community.

Our commitment, as you know, is to build new and redeveloped beds, 58,000 new long-term-care spaces right across the province to be able to meet the growing demand of a seniors' population but also a population where some of the seniors' needs are significant in terms of health issues. And I know the folks that are in long-term-care homes in fact have very complex health care needs.

So I wonder, Chris, if you could speak a little bit to the needs and how being able to build more rapidly would actually address those health care needs.

Mr. Chris Pugh: Absolutely. I think I quoted some of the numbers, but we know that our population over 80 will double by 2040. That's just 16 years. One in five of those seniors will need long-term care; their needs are just too complex. And so expediting those homes and expediting redevelopment is critical to meet the government's targets by 2029 so that we can ensure that we have long-term care there for those who need it, when they need it. I think I already highlighted it, but our wait-list today is at 43,000. If we aren't able to expedite those homes, the wait-list will continue to grow by about 38% over the next 10 years. We want to make sure those homes are there so that people can have them, they have access to care.

I also just want to say the story behind it, right. If someone is at home and they aren't receiving the care they need, you have a caregiver, usually, behind them who is overwhelmed and stressed. You have someone who is struggling to just maintain supports in a home when they really need to be in long-term care. A lot of times, those individuals end up in hospital with a crisis. They stay in hospital, and we see these pressures now in our health care system, and then these individuals need to go into long-term care. So to reduce pressures on the health care system, just make sure people are getting the care they need, where they need it.

That's why this bill is important in expediting those long-term-care homes and those redevelopments.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Chris. The government very much agrees that the care they should receive should be in the correct setting that is more suitable for the individual.

Could you also give us some sense—we've been talking about innovative building techniques, including modular construction. Could you give us some sense of whether there are in fact uses like this that could actually apply in a long-term-care setting?

Mr. Chris Pugh: I'll say, I think our homes are looking at some of the changes that are being enabled through Bill 185, but what we are seeing is—and I think we do have very defined standards for how our homes are built, but there's some opportunity for innovation there. I think Bill 185 opens up the opportunity to look at, how could we build homes differently?

I think, more importantly, or kind of related: How do we build homes for residents and how do we use innovative building techniques to build better homes that

are built better for those who we care for? I think what we're seeing is that our members are really committed to finding those solutions and working on those innovations with the government.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: You also mentioned that, from approval to construction, completion may be anywhere from three to five years, and I would think three years is probably very optimistic, given the current environment. So could you speak to us a little bit about the approval process and where some of those delays and barriers currently exist for you?

Mr. Chris Pugh: Yes. I think there's delays across the process, and we're seeing within our own ministry—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Mr. Chris Pugh:—our minister has done significant work, as well as the public service, to figure out how can we speed up approvals within the ministry, how can we look at things like other methods for improving designs and standards. And then we also have approvals at the municipal level that can take some time. For a while there, we saw governments kind of working across each other, and what we're seeing now is, with certain changes like Bill 185, different levels of government are able to work better together to ensure that we're faster in those approvals and we can get homes to construction sooner. I think additionally, the top-up program that the government has just introduced has really helped move projects forward quicker. The first top-up I know was reannounced in the budget this year.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): We'll now go to the official opposition. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to all three of you, as well as the individuals who are online, for coming today. I know you all have busy lives, and we appreciate it.

I have questions for each of you. I'm going to start with Chris. Chris, I have two questions for you. First off, I was wanting to know what specifically in Bill 185 you think will spur the construction of long-term-care homes. You mentioned a little bit about MZOs; I was wanting to know if there is anything else. That's my first question.

My second question is, in our riding we do not have any long-term-care homes being built. What we're seeing is long-term-care homes that are in an aging facility and they are closing. We've had Vermont Square close; we've had Cedarvale close just north of us; and I fear that St. George long-term-care home on St. George Street could be possibly closing as well. I'm not sure, but I'm worried about it. What is your association's position on protecting the long-term-care homes that we've got? Those are my two questions.

Mr. Chris Pugh: I'll take the first one. I think what we're seeing in Bill 185 is that, first, the ability of community service facilities to be prioritized would be critical, especially if long-term-care homes can be built into that; the work on MZOs; and then also I think—and I hinted to it a bit—the work being done to support municipalities in infrastructure. You see a number of homes

where we're waiting for infrastructure. Just supporting that, particularly in rural communities, is critical.

On your question about closing, I think it's first important to start off that I don't think any home closes lightly. That's not an easy decision. We're seeing small homes, homes across rural Ontario closing. These are homes run by generations of families who are committed to caring for their residents. So I don't think any—none of those closures are simple. I think what we're seeing is the impacts of years of not moving forward and not getting long-term-care homes redeveloped.

Our homes have dealt with significant barriers, both in a capital program that wasn't working until 2020, and then we dealt with a pandemic, which limited a lot of our capital program; staffing, which we continue to struggle with but are working through, thanks to the government's investments; and then operational funding stability, which, thanks to the budget, we've seen some changes and we're seeing homes finally creating some stability there.

Ultimately, I think the key there is to have a capital program that's moving forward to allow those older homes to redevelop and to make sure that there's a path forward for them. I'd say specifically in Toronto and rural Ontario, those are unique situations that are quite difficult to develop in, so working with government on innovative solutions for those areas where there may be more barriers to building those homes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Chris.

My next question is to Nathalie, as well as Lindsay and David on the phone, but Nathalie, because you're here I'll start with you. I have two questions for you. The first one is, can you give all of the committee members just a rundown on the scale of demolitions that are happening in Toronto and what measures overall you think the provincial government should be taking to protect tenants if they find that their building is slated to be demolished?

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: Of course. Currently, just in the city of Toronto itself, we see that there are an estimated 100 purpose-built rental buildings that are occupied with tenants that are slated for demolition. We anticipate that this will affect over 10,000 people just in the city of Toronto. We know that this is also happening in Hamilton, in Ottawa and in other cities across the province.

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Currently, as per the RTA, tenants who live in units in buildings that have six units or more get three months worth of rent—their current rent, not market rent—and they also get a right of return. Anybody who has less is not entitled to it. There's also another thing where people who apply after an application has been submitted are not entitled to a right of return.

What we want is a model that is similar to the tenant relocation assistance plan in Toronto, and we want it to be installed on a provincial level to ensure that all tenants throughout the province in various cities receive the same amount of protections, and those include a rent gap payment top-up. This is a payment that will help to bridge the difference of their current rent along with the new

market rent during the period of displacement. We want them to have a right of return with the same facilities that they previously had. We want more transparency of the process, so that people are aware of what is happening. We want it to be for all tenants, regardless of how many units there are in the building, how long they've lived there and whether it was before or after the application.

There are a lot more details that we can add, of course, in a consultation process. It is also because we don't want to off-load these problems onto tenants who live in single-resident houses. Maybe there are three floors and each floor has tenants. We are for densification; we just don't necessarily agree with the idea of destroying these multi-level buildings that are in perfectly fine condition and displacing hundreds, sometimes thousands, of tenants when we could be densifying on plots of land where there are single homes. But we want to make sure that those tenants are protected.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for bringing that up. This is affecting Toronto Centre, University–Rosedale and Spadina–Fort York a lot, where we're seeing these very big purpose-built rentals that are being slated to be demolished. The people who live in them—many seniors, younger people, workers—are just terrified that they're not going to be able to live in the neighbourhood that they love. They don't know where to go. There's no affordable place to go and they're very worried that their right of return won't be enforced, so they fear they won't be able to move back into their home once the construction of the new building is complete.

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: If I just may add one additional point, since we're also talking about long-term-care homes: For a lot of seniors who are affected, that could prematurely push them into going into the long-term-care system because they don't have any other options for housing, and we already know that it is a system that is overburdened. What we want is for tenants to be able to live independently as long as possible with care in-home before moving to the next stage.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Sure. I'm going to ask my question, and then, Katie, you might have to answer it in the next round, so we'll see. I have two questions for you, Katie:

(1) I'm curious to know how your organization has effectively used third-party appeals to protect land and water.

(2) Could you clarify specifically for us what recommendations you'd like to see in Bill 185?

Ms. Katie Krelove: Yes. RGMC itself doesn't do third-party appeals, but we work with many citizen groups that do, across the province but mainly in southern Ontario. There are many that are currently waiting for their hearing to be scheduled, and those will be cancelled with no refund of any of their expenses if this goes through. But yes—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. She was right about you having to wait for the next round for the answer.

We'll now go to MPP Anand.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to welcome all the presenters here. Along with this, Chair, we have Nina Deeb in our room as well. Welcome, Nina.

The greater Toronto authority also wanted to come and present; they could not come because of the overwhelming response the Clerk received, so I just want to say to everyone who has not been invited and wants to submit their submission, you can still do it through the Clerk of the Committee.

My question is to Nathalie of No Demovictions. Thank you for coming. I'm just trying to understand, and I was looking and reading over, "No Demovictions is a collection of tenant associations supporting tenants through education, organization and action towards policy change." Thank you for your work, especially the education.

Typically, a lot of people who come to the committee will say, "We want less reliance on private transportation or cars. We want more in public transportation, and that's why we want less parking." I heard the opposite today. You're kind of saying, "No, there should be parking."

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: What I'm saying is that there should be, at the minimum, a replacement of current existing parking because there are people who rely on it for many reasons. If you would like specific examples, I can give them to you, including tenants who live in my building and tenants who have approached us about their concerns. It is also because we want to make sure that all of the new developments are not just for fully able-bodied people; they are not just for people who do not require care; they are not just for people who don't require a car for their work because then we're just omitting an entire section of the population.

Again, we would like it to be in proportion to the development. We are not looking for massive new parking spaces for thousands upon thousands of vehicles within a tiny city block.

Mr. Deepak Anand: The second thing I noticed when we were talking about the tenancies, you were talking about—in your view, what is an ideal landlord or an ideal model of tenancy? What would that be?

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: An ideal model of tenancy or landlord?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Well, you can't separate them; they have to be together. So landlord, for example—what kind of landlord is an ideal kind of a landlord?

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: An ideal landlord would be somebody who is transparent with tenants with regard to what is going on; ensures that there is proper maintenance of the building; if accessibility accommodations are required, that they are met; that they are also available and not evasive, as we have seen certain landlords; and who do not apply for AGIs, especially consistently, because we see that happens in a few buildings where there are AGIs that are applied for year after year after year. Most of the AGIs that we have seen have come from corporate landlords and not even the little mom-and-pop landlords.

We want housing to remain affordable. It is a space that is offered for housing; it is not something meant for financialization and for profit.

Mr. Deepak Anand: As you know, the tenants who are facing eviction due to the evolution of the rental units are entitled to existing protection under the Residential Tenancies Act, RTA, wherein they must be provided at least 120 days' notice in writing to the landlord's intention to demolish or convert, the right to a hearing at the LTB, and another rental unit acceptable to the tenant or to receive an amount equal to three months if the property has five-plus units, as you also were talking about, and one month's rent if it less than five units.

My question to you would be, in this situation—because education is a big piece for you guys—what advice do you have to help tenants who are being evicted because their building is being demolished? Are there ways to do this without discouraging investment in the new housing supply? What would you like to tell them?

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: We would like them to get organized, to inform themselves of what their rights really are so that they can have the minimum that they are entitled to. We also would like, if they are in a municipality that does not afford them further protections to ensure that they will continue to have a place to live, that they push their municipal governments to change policy to ensure that they have a right to a place to live and can afford it. But mostly, we would also like tenants in Ontario as a collective to push the provincial government to put these in place so that these don't become per-municipality policies that can change here or there. We would like every tenant in Ontario to have the same rights.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you so much.

My next question is to Chris from the Ontario Long Term Care Association. Chris, this morning, or maybe yesterday, we heard from the universities. They were talking about how it takes 16 months to build and 42 months to get the approval. What is your opinion about the—would you agree that the long-term-care homes have faced delays in navigating the municipal approval processes? Would an expedited process be helpful in getting shovels ready in the ground faster?

Mr. Chris Pugh: Absolutely. I think that our homes consistently—we talked about that three to five years, which is hopeful in many situations, is due to those approvals processes. Once we can get shovels in the ground and can start building, we can build quickly. So working through that process and things like Bill 185 have helped expedite that process and will help get homes built quicker in the province.

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Mr. Deepak Anand: Simply put, yes or no, do you think Bill 185 is a step in the right direction?

Mr. Chris Pugh: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you.

That's it from me, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Okay. MPP Hogarth, you have 1.2 minutes left.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Okay. I actually want to start with Nathalie. I just had a little bit about the use-it-or-lose-it clause. I was talking to some of my constituents in Etobicoke–Lakeshore, and they were very positive about this schedule. We see a lot of inactive properties, so we always think, “That could be a rental unit, or that could be a fourplex—or a sixplex or an eightplex—or apartments for others, or affordable housing.” Your thoughts on this in Bill 185? Do you think that will help the rental market? Do you think it will help spur some growth faster? Because at the end of the day, our goal is to get shovels in the ground, get homes built—all kinds of houses: affordable houses, attainable houses, which are two very different things, or just a place for people to live. Your thoughts on the use-it-or-lose-it clause?

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: I think, in principle, it will help. However, the provisions can be strengthened so that it is from the moment that the application and the permits are approved so that tenants are not left waiting for years upon end—because that is something that land speculators do. That is about speculation and money and not about housing.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Okay. Well, thank you for that, and thank you for the work that you do.

My final question is for Chris—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes the time.

With that, we will go to MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: First, for No Demovictions: When these calls come into our offices as MPPs, it's usually seniors, it's usually women, it's usually racialized folks who have found, against all odds, something affordable. Really, that's their home. As MPPs, there's not a lot of recourse for us.

But Bill 185 was an opportunity for the government to start to think about purpose-built non-market housing—truly attainable housing—that is so desperate. I wondered if you might talk about how important it is as a solution to the housing crisis in Ontario for the government to focus on that particular window, which they are stubbornly dug in about—just how hopeful it could be if the government actually went into the non-market housing business, specifically for those folks.

Ms. Nathalie Ai Rei Dooh-Tousignant: Sure. I can say it's not just important; it's necessary. It's really necessary to build more affordable housing—and fast—and to prioritize that over for-profit projects, because the majority of people cannot afford the new developments that are being built. Again, who are we building this for?

We understand that development is necessary in a growing population. We are not against it. But it goes back to the question of, where are they going to go? If we're not going to build more affordable housing, these people have nowhere to go once they are evicted.

There are also provisions that allow for an applicant, after 20 years of a replacement unit, to apply to change that unit to a market unit. So somebody who has lived in their replacement unit and went through the whole demo-

viction process—20 years later, they could potentially be evicted and have even less to fall back on.

We're talking about a crisis now, but we're talking about a crisis that's going to be 20 times worse in a few decades, and it's coming a lot faster than we think. We know that building affordable housing takes time to do it well, so we really do need to start doing it now.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you so much for that.

And just a quick question for the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition: The Auditor General's report on aggregate and gravel was scathing around who is getting permits, how fast they're getting permits and how the land is being treated. Particularly, I would say, in Waterloo region, there are so many open applicants right now for licences. Nothing is happening with them, the vast majority. They're just essentially land-banking them for the future, because they see this window of opportunity where the AG said inspections are not happening, violations are not being upheld, fines are not being charged. Can you give us a high-level recommendation for this government and how important it is to get reformed gravel mining back on track?

Ms. Katie Krelove: Yes, the report from the Auditor General did call attention to a lot of problematic issues with the regulation, with the monitoring, with enforcement of permits and licences for gravel mines. It also draws attention to the fact that there are no real known records of supply for Ontario because companies aren't required to release how much are in the reserves of gravel mines that are already there, and yet they'll still be going to open more.

So there's a lot to reform in terms of how they are permitted. Right now, they're also treated as temporary use, which really restricts the amount of environmental assessments that go into permits and licences. But we know from that report that they're not temporary, that they lie dormant for years and years and years because it's cheaper to keep them open and not use them than to rehabilitate them, so the rehabilitation that's supposed to happen is also not happening.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's a really good point. I meet with the gravel folks, the aggregate folks. Do you know what? They have said that some of them do want to close their pits and rehabilitate them, but MNRF, it takes seven, eight years. So there are problems on both sides. If we're going to have these open pits—and the owners want to close them, they want to rehabilitate them, they're supposed to, but getting the approvals from MNRF has proven to be filled with red tape. It's ironic.

Ms. Katie Krelove: I will say that a lot of the groups that we work with as well—a lot of citizens' groups who are opposing new pits and quarries are already surrounded by pits and quarries. And a lot of times they tell us, they report to us that they're doing the job of monitoring that the MNRF is not doing. So they'll report when, suddenly, there's blasting and rock flies at people's houses, on people's cars. It damages people's houses and cars. Or suddenly, their sky is so full of dust and particulate that you can't even see your hand in front of you, and that's

covering your car and your driveway and your house. They'll report it, and they get nowhere even when they report it.

So, yes, there has to be a lot more in the approval process as well as the monitoring. If we look at other locations, there are a lot higher fees per tonne of gravel that's extracted. Ontario doesn't even charge enough fees to cover the bureaucratic needs or administrative needs of the MNRF, the AFA.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Ms. Katie Krelove: And recycling: Recycled aggregate is actually—there's a lot of potential there—

Ms. Catherine Fife: There is, yes. I wish we had more time to talk about that.

I'm just going to pass it to my colleague so she can finish her question set.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to give you time to finish your answer to the question that I had, the second question, which is, what recommendations would you like us to introduce to Bill 185?

Ms. Katie Krelove: Well, to answer your last question, probably the most well-known success story of a citizen group going to the OLT—in the gravel mining world, anyway—was to challenge an expansion of the Nelson quarry that is in Burlington and is on the Niagara Escarpment. It's a UNESCO world biosphere reserve and it would have also impacted class A farmland. They overturned that permit partly because of the discovery of endangered—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for that presentation. It also concludes the time for this panel. With that, I want to thank all the panellists for a great job in preparing for this hearing today and for the able way you presented your positions. We very much appreciate that.

WATERLOO FEDERATION
OF AGRICULTURE

ONTARIO REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION
FEDERATION OF RENTAL-HOUSING
PROVIDERS OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The next panel is the next panel is the Ontario Real Estate Association, the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture and the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario.

As they're coming forward, we will go through the rules of engagement. Each presenter will have seven minutes to make their presentation. At six minutes, I will notify you that there's one minute left. I won't say "left," just "one minute." At seven minutes, I will say, "Thank you," and your mike will be cut off, and we will go on to the next item.

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We do also ask each presenter to identify themselves prior to their presentation to make sure that we can attribute the Hansard copy of your presentation to the right person.

So, with that, the first presenter will be the Ontario Real Estate Association.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, thank you very much, Chair. I believe, Chair, we have our president joining us remotely.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): They're not on just yet.

Mr. Tim Hudak: So, do I stall for six and a half minutes?

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): To be fair, if the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture does not have someone on the other end that needs to be on, we could turn this around and let them go first. We are a little ahead of time because we had some time saved during the last presentation.

So with that, we'll turn it over to the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. Mark Reusser: My name is Mark Reusser. I'm a farmer from Wilmot township in Waterloo region. I am vice-president of the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture, and I would like to focus this afternoon on Bill 185's transfer of planning authority from Waterloo region to the lower tiers and its potential to negatively affect agriculture.

But first, I'd like to put it in context, so please bear with me. We live in a very special place here in southwestern Ontario. We have a wonderful temperate climate. We are moderated by three Great Lakes, and we have highly productive soil. Farmland in southern Ontario can grow a longer list of fruits and vegetables than anywhere else in North America, with the exception of California. Yet, we are on a trajectory to lose half of our farmland in Ontario by 2051, primarily to development.

We realized in Waterloo region about 50 years ago that without visionary planning, our farmland would disappear. So in 1973, we began a journey—a journey to plan and build the most innovative urban community in Canada, the most attractive place to build homes and businesses and at the same time protect and enhance a flourishing agricultural countryside. The tool to do this was and is regional government and regional planning authority. It worked.

We as a region are far more than the sum of our parts. Without visionary regional planning authority, we would not have the following—and I have a list: (1) things that are unique to Waterloo region in North America: a regional water quality program known across North America for its unique partnership between the region, the conservation authority and farmers that incentivizes water quality improvements in the countryside; (2) the countryside line, that hard boundary between urban and rural that has been maintained since 1973 and has protected our valuable farmland; (3) the environmentally sensitive landscape designation protecting the headwaters of our cold-water watersheds from development; (4) the protected countryside designation that protects the Waterloo moraine and the aquifer underneath it—Waterloo region is the biggest user of underground water in Canada; (5) a light rapid transit system now running near capacity not found in any comparably sized city in North America, a system that has enticed and enabled billions of dollars in housing, de-

velopment, industry and commerce along its route; and (6) perhaps most importantly, regional government has allowed us to successfully achieve intensification. Between 70% and 80% of all new dwellings are built within the urban envelope. That's an intensification rate higher than anywhere else other than Toronto.

If Waterloo region had the same urban density today as it had in 1973, there would be no farmland left in the region. It would all be urban. Visionary planning at the regional level has been an unparalleled success. Waterloo region is a facilitator of not an impediment to housing.

Our planning regime here in Waterloo is—well, I'll say it this way: Our planning regime in Waterloo should be the template for planning in all of Ontario. The evidence is there for everyone to see: three thriving cities, three universities, employment opportunities that municipalities can only dream of and some of the best food-producing land on the continent. We don't have to invent anything new; Waterloo has already done it for us.

Don't be seduced, intimidated and coerced by those who argue that we have no choice but to sprawl. We have a choice. We all have a choice, and the farmers of Waterloo and all of Ontario encourage you to choose wisely. Choose to support communities like Waterloo region that actively and purposefully seek to build places where you, your children and their descendants will want to live and work.

Is Waterloo's form of regional government perfect? Of course not. Anything can be improved. How can the province support our efforts to preserve the landscape, build houses, and encourage and facilitate job growth? Support Waterloo's regional government structure. It works. And number two, restore regional planning authority in our official plan.

In conclusion, we ask that you support Waterloo region, its innovative policies and prudent and visionary planning that allows us to advance our vision of a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable municipality that respects both the landscape and those that live on it.

And finally, remember this: There is only one landscape, and the people, the natural environment and agriculture all have to share it. We can have the best of both worlds: a place to live and a place to grow; a place to work and a place to grow food. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for the presentation.

For our next presentation, we'll now go back to the Ontario Real Estate Association, and I believe the people are now virtually on the line. So, with that, we'll turn it back over to you, Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Chair. You've done this before, clearly.

I'd like to introduce our president, Rick Kedzior.

Mr. Rick Kedzior: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Rick Kedzior, president of the Ontario Real Estate Association and an Oakville-based realtor. Joining me virtually is my colleague Cathy Polan, president-elect and realtor in the Quinte area. With you in person, obviously, is CEO Tim Hudak.

OREA represents Ontario's real estate professionals. In fact, we are one of the largest trade associations in Canada, with nearly 100,000 members. Every day, my fellow realtors and I help our clients find a great, affordable place to call home, where they can raise a family and make a lifetime of memories. But home ownership remains a distant dream for a lot of hard-working people, and it's becoming harder to make that dream a reality. Just five years ago, in 2019, the average price of an Ontario home was \$594,000. Today, it's \$890,000, a 50% increase.

This issue is not isolated to urban areas. The affordability crisis has spread far and wide, affecting communities from Windsor to Waterloo, from Oxford to Oakville. In the Quinte area, for example, where our president-elect is from, the average price of a home has nearly doubled in the last five years, currently around \$613,000. At OREA, we want to ensure future generations will be able to achieve the dream of home ownership, so it is our pleasure to be here today to share our thoughts on Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act.

OREA has focused our advocacy efforts on housing supply, affordability, raising the bar on professional standards and ethics within real estate, and modernizing the sector. Today, we'll be focusing on affordability and supply, through the lens of modernization. This includes critical zoning reforms, infrastructure funding reforms to lower housing costs and introducing new models of home ownership in Ontario.

At this time, I'll pass the floor over to OREA CEO Tim Hudak to speak further.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, thank you very much, President Rick. Chair and members of the committee, great to see you here today.

As Rick indicated, the big problem in the province of Ontario is we have more and more people chasing fewer and fewer homes. It has become a cruel game of musical chairs for people trying to get in the housing market or to move up when the kids come along. The main problems here, Chair, are rampant NIMBYism; we've had interest rates that have been too high for too long now that inflation is under control; and just too much red tape that slows down building and drives housing costs away.

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The government brought forward the Housing Affordability Task Force. I had the honour of sitting on that task force, Chair, and there were 55 recommendations. I'm pleased to report back, as I did in February, that 76% have either been fully implemented or are on their way. For government reports, that is a commendable record, but there is more work that needs to be done. We're seeing more initiatives here in this bill before the committee today, in Bill 185, that we strongly support, particularly around new options to finance water and waste water infrastructure. Really, if that's done through a utility model, as the government is looking at, and I know other parties are as well, that could relieve up to \$50,000 to \$60,000 off the price of a new home to help people get into the marketplace.

Other initiatives: limiting parking minimums; building secondary suites—make it easier; mass timber structures up to 18 storeys—great move; business service stands for permit and licensing services—awesome; and a greater ability to get modular homes built—perfect. Stay the course, and Bill 185 does that, helps check off more boxes.

Let me focus, Chair—and I'm happy in the questions later, if you like—on three more things that should be done, I want to emphasize. There's no doubt that bold action is going to get homes built. Number one on this is the government should move towards four storeys as of right across the province. This is really going to be the key for many first-time homebuyers to get into the marketplace as well as for empty nesters to downsize and open up the family home for somebody else. Look, if you can tear down a wartime bungalow, whether you're in Oxford county, in Toronto or in Waterloo, and build a four-storey monster home, that's your right. We support that. You own the property; you've worked hard for your money. But you should also have the ability, then, to knock down that wartime bungalow and build a duplex or a triplex or a fourplex. These are affordable homes to help people get into the marketplace.

Number two, we'd like to see—this is part of the Housing Affordability Task Force report—upzoning along transit corridors and major roadways. So, government is making significant investments in transit. It makes a lot of sense, then, to allow upzoning along there, as well as conversion of commercial properties into residential units.

And third and finally, Chair, new opportunities for home ownership, new models that we probably haven't thought of in the past. Particularly for Ontarians—Black Ontarians have a very low home ownership rate. Indigenous peoples have a very low home ownership rate. We need to do more to help communities who aren't in the housing market get in. If you come from a family that has a lot of equity in their home, you can borrow from the bank of mom and dad. If you're renters, it's harder. So, new models around co-ownership, shared equity programs, for example—helping disadvantaged communities get in the market will make a huge difference.

Chair, my president-elect, Cathy Polan, is going to bring some more perspectives from what she sees in Quinte. But I want to reiterate, you're on the right path. Just steel the spine, implement these ideas and you can help make that Canadian dream of home ownership a reality for more hard-working Ontarians.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Ms. Cathy Polan: Chair, members of the committee, as president-elect of OREA, I can tell you one truth today: We cannot solve the housing affordability crisis without increasing housing supply across the province. From Toronto to Belleville, from purpose-built rentals to new homes, families across Ontario strive to find a safe, affordable place to call home in their community of choice. This is what drives me. It's what drives my fellow realtors and the work that we do each day. As realtors, we want to continue to do this work to allow us to help people find a

great place to live. But we cannot do it without further action. The legislation is a good step. As the housing market continues to shift and change, now is the time to continue to—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the time. Hopefully we can get the rest of your presentation in during the question period.

With that, our next presenter will be the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario. The floor is yours.

Mr. Asquith Allen: Thank you, Uncle Ernie. Good evening, committee members. My name is Asquith Allen, and I serve as the director of policy and regulatory affairs at the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, or FRPO for short.

FRPO has been the leading voice of the province's rental housing industry for over 30 years. We are the largest association in the province, representing those who own, manage, build and finance residential rental units. We represent more than 2,200 members who own and/or manage over 350,000 units across the province. Today, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to provide FRPO's comments as the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs studies Bill 185, the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024.

I'll start by providing a brief overview of the current state of Ontario's rental market. Our rental market has significantly tightened over the last few years. Earlier this year, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. released its annual rental market survey for 2023. In Ontario, CMHC reported a vacancy rate of 1.7% as of October 2023, a decrease of 3.5% from October 2021. CMHC reported that vacancy for more family-sized units, such as two-bedroom apartments, is even lower, at 1.6%.

In terms of new supply, there has been some positive movement since the provincial and federal governments announced the removal of HST from purpose-built rental developments. Over the last four quarters, a total of 5,976 units started construction, which amounts to a 174% increase from the four-quarter period ending Q3 2022.

However, starts are still down from 2021 levels of over 7,500 units. This is primarily reflective of the high interest rate environment. Our pipeline of units under construction does remain strong, with 22,064 units under construction as of Q1 2024.

Moving on to provisions in Bill 185, the bill contains several changes that would impact our members in their day-to-day development considerations as well as other changes that impact the system in general. First, in terms of measures that are positive for rental housing builders in Ontario, the government is moving to remove minimum parking requirements in all major transit station areas, or MTSAs, as they are known.

Arbitrary minimum parking bylaws that could result in parking that is higher than what market would otherwise supply is not good public policy, nor is it helpful to builders. Reducing parking results in better environmental outcomes due to fewer car trips, increased ridership for transit, healthier communities due to more neighbourhoods being planned as walkable and complete commun-

ities. Parking also adds significant cost to developments. Depending on the local situation such as bedrock conditions and how many floors you need to dig, a single parking unit could add over \$100,000 in cost per parking space to new developments.

FRPO supports the move to let the market determine the appropriate parking level in a new development as opposed to the arbitrary parking minimums that would result in more parking being built than the market would otherwise build.

The government is also moving to make pre-application consultation meetings voluntary at the discretion of the applicant. Previous measures in Bill 23 that required a refund of the application fee if a decision was not made by the deadline resulted in many municipalities shifting the work to a mandatory pre-application stage. This did not help any party involved in the process, and it did not result in the intended outcome of fast-tracking approvals. In fact, in some situations, applicants were stuck for extended times at the pre-application stage, perhaps even longer than they would under the previous regime. Accordingly, FRPO supports the government decision to make pre-application consultations voluntary at the discretion of the applicant.

There are also some measures in Bill 185 that are somewhat challenging for rental housing builders in the province. The government is pulling back the five-year requirement to phase in any increases to development charges. This means that developments would have to pay a higher DC than under the Bill 23 regime at a time when project economics are already strained.

At a time when we need to build more housing and developments are facing significant interest rate headwinds, FRPO does not believe adding more costs to housing is the right decision.

In addition to removing the five-year phase-in, the bill also reinstates studies as eligible DC costs and reduces the DC freeze period from two years to 18 months. Both changes increase cost in housing in addition to the impact of removing the five-year phase in.

Bill 185 also seeks to ban most third-party appeals for both municipally initiated and privately initiated zoning and official plan amendments. The intention to limit delays as a result of third-party appeals is applauded. However, not all appeals are frivolous in nature. The government should differentiate between truly frivolous appeals, for example, ones by resident groups who simply want to oppose all development, also known as NIMBYs, and legitimate appeals. Developers often file appeals to adjacent projects to protect against impact on their developments. These issues are often settled through the mediation process or decisions through the Ontario Land Tribunal process.

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Additionally, landowners with development projects would be third parties for municipally initiated official plan or zoning amendments. There could be legitimate issues impacting their development as a result of city-wide policy, so appeal rights would need to be protected in that

scenario as well. FRPO supports a more scoped-down ban on third-party appeals where legitimate appeal rights are protected.

In summary, Bill 185 includes measures that are positive for Ontario's rental housing industry. However, it also includes measures to that would add more cost to building more rental projects in the province.

I thank you for your time and would be happy to take your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much for the presentation. We now will start with the questions. We'll start with the official opposition. MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to all delegations. We know you're busy, and we appreciate your time coming here today.

Mark, I want to start with you, because what's happening in Wilmot township right now is shocking. I watched the OFA video of the farmers who came before regional council. Forced expropriation of 770 acres of prime farmland—no discussion, no debate. They've been approached by real estate agents who appear to know that this land is up for sale. They've been approached by an American corporation called Canacre, who told them, "\$29,000 an acre or we're going to expropriate on behalf of the region." And then, we also saw developers go in prior to all of this, in January, offering \$57,000 an acre—silence from our duly elected representatives in the region, no environmental assessment outside of the official plan.

What do you think the motivation is here? Because it does seem like Bill 185 certainly opens the door for the Wild West of expropriation of prime farmland in the name of a mega industrial site. I wanted to get you on the record, please.

Mr. Mark Reusser: Thank you for the question. I am always saddened when I see farmland disappear. I am two concessions away, so yes, it will affect me. The loss of farmland is a huge issue, but I would suggest that the lack of process is what concerns a lot of people—a lot of people who aren't farmers.

Fairness is so important these days, and when people don't see fairness in their government, they lose respect for government, and that is sad and unfortunate. These days, when we don't have respect for our institutions, it doesn't bode well. Secrecy and deals done behind closed doors, while they may be necessary in very select cases, I think they are not looked on favourably by the public, and I would suggest that it is best for any government to be open and transparent and recognize and respect the views of everyone in the community.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The government and the Premier—when he came to the region, he said they put the call out to municipalities to find large swaths of land, but at the same time, also, the Wilmot mayor is also seeking, I think, almost 2,000 acres for new housing.

It's interesting that the Minister of Economic Development said that an EV plant couldn't go there because there's not enough water for an EV plant. People don't understand that Waterloo region is one of the only municipalities in Ontario that depends 80% on the source

groundwater for our drinking water. There's no pipeline. There's no plan B here.

You mentioned in your opening comments that water quality and protecting the Waterloo moraine is something that regional council traditionally has put an emphasis on. How do you square this? Because this is a risky project that will change the entire landscape of Waterloo region and directly goes against everything that they've done, including their own regional plan that says we want willing partners. Are those farmers willing partners to have their land expropriated?

Mr. Mark Reusser: The answer to that is probably no, but I'll answer it in a different way, and that is, again, people respect process. Process has not been followed. People look at that negatively, and it is unfortunate. Process is important because it lays everything on the table, people can see that there are options, and then they can be part of the choosing of those options. And then they have a hand in it, and it becomes something that they own, partially. In this case, it hasn't happened and there's a visceral reaction, and that is, "This isn't fair. This isn't right." Let's do it right in the future. That's the best for everyone.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I do agree with you that, traditionally, Waterloo region has been a template, a leader in finding that balance between agriculture and urban, and not compromising on the quality of life for people in the region. I take your point that we're losing 319 acres of farmland every day. It's going to run out of eventually. We should know better in 2024, is my point, but I do appreciate your words that you brought today.

Tim, I'm going to go over to you—real estate agent, the realtors across the province. You did tie in your comments around rampant NIMBYism. You know the recommendations; you were on the government's own the committee.

The Premier of the province says, "I can assure you 1,000%, you go in the middle of communities and start putting up four-storey, six-storey, eight-storey buildings right deep in the communities, there's going to be a lot of shouting and screaming. That's a massive mistake."

This is another quote: "It's off the table for us. We're going to build homes, single-dwelling homes, townhomes."

The housing committee recommended fourplexes as of right. The government has triplexes as of right. The next time you see the Premier, will you tell him that a fourplex is not four storeys, six storeys or eight storeys? I would really appreciate that. Isn't this the very definition of NIMBYism by Premier Ford?

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Through you, Chair: I used to sit in that very chair and I'd throw a curveball or two as well.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know you did.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, I think we'd all agree single family, duplexes, triplexes as of right—we want to go for a basis there. When you look at the best fourplex examples out there where they exist in our province and elsewhere, you really can't tell them apart from other homes. They tend to be two storeys. As you may know, MPP Fife,

Toronto has gone through with this. They have a three-storey cap as part of their bylaw.

If we really want to make a difference for average folks to get into the market—not everybody wants to live in a condo all their lives; not everybody can afford the single-family home with lots of space—you have to something in the middle. And really, a fourplex—

Ms. Catherine Fife: So I'm hearing yes, that statement around not intensification in neighbourhoods is NIMBYism—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you. I'm hearing time's up.

We'll now go to the government. MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'd like to give Mr. Hudak an opportunity to finish his comments, and then I have another quick question for him and one for Mark as well.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll be quick. You want to make sure that you can build homes that people can afford in big cities and small towns. If you grew up in Woodstock or Conestoga, you always thought if you worked hard, played by the rules, you could afford a home in the community you grew up in. That's no longer the case.

I think of my own family when I was a kid or when Deb and I had our first home. The duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes are really good for that entry-level housing. I do think that the advisable policy that the task force brought forward and we reinforce at OREA is to allow those four homes. Cap them at three storeys, great, that's what Toronto has done, but let's get them built and give the keys to some young families.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'd just like to pivot over to Mark for a second—Mark, my neighbour 10 minutes down the road. Let's talk a little bit about sustainable development in our more rural communities across the province. I know in the conversation I've had with our rural mayors in particular and other ones across the province, and I know MPP Rae has also had an opportunity to chat with many of them, they want to be able to grow their municipalities. They want to be able to not only build more homes, but provide good jobs and allow for residents and families that have grown up in those communities to be able to stay there and keep the family tradition alive. I think that's one thing, certainly in farming communities across the province, that really lends to their charm and is part of that rural way of life.

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I just want to get some of your thoughts. Obviously, like you said, the region of Waterloo does some things well and could probably do some other things better. But just sort of generally, as a whole, how do you view sustainable development in rural communities and how do we strike that balance between providing housing, providing good jobs, but also making sure that we're able to keep that rural way of life going?

Mr. Mark Reusser: Well, I would use Waterloo as an example. We designated a long time ago certain places that could grow and certain places that couldn't, utilizing the fact that it is very expensive to service far-flung communities with municipal septic and municipal water

and that it is a lot cheaper to service them in a place like a city or a larger town.

In terms of affordability of housing, it is far cheaper to provide housing in a city or a town than it is out in a suburb. It just is. One of the things that concerns us in the rural community, especially in the farming community, is the push to grow suburbs that are far-flung at lower densities. They gobble up farmland. In the end, they cost everyone a lot more money because of the cost of servicing.

Let's continue to build things in a compact form. Let's build livable communities where people want to be. One of the things that has interested me in the Waterloo region is that when we build a big building, which we have been approving at the rate of about one a week over the past year, every one of those units is pre-sold before you put a shovel in the ground. When people say that people don't want to live in tall buildings, they're wrong, because a certain demographic does want to live in those kind of buildings. Not everyone has to live in a great, big, tall building. For goodness' sake, let's build all those things in the middle. Provide choice.

I think when you're building housing, you have to provide choice, and you will find that many people choose to live in places that you don't think that they would.

Mr. Mike Harris: It's interesting that you mention that, because there's been a push, through the municipalities, in fact, to build some of those, sort of, we'll say, low-rise residential units in places like Elmira and New Hamburg, Baden—that corridor. The community has pushed back against it, which is interesting. We've talked about NIMBYism today; it's been a bit of the theme. So what would you say to those municipal leaders that want to build those types of housing but are getting pushback from residents that don't necessarily want to see it?

Mr. Mark Reusser: Well, I'll use my fellow presenter here, his words, Mr. Hudak, who said: "Grow a spine."

One of the things that's happened over a period of years in the Waterloo region—and I'm talking about the cities, primarily Waterloo and Kitchener—our politicians did not back down. They said that this is a choice that we will make. We will facilitate higher density, we will facilitate intensification, and we will build it in a way and in a place where people want to live and grow. And they did not back down.

One of the ironies about small towns who say they don't want intensification is that the reason they want to live there is because it's a small town. If you build suburbs all around it, it's no longer a small town. You've defeated your original purpose. I think people actually do—politicians and people in the community do have to grow a spine and say, "We have to make a choice: Do you want to preserve farmland? Do you want to preserve the land that produces food? Do you want to preserve the natural environment? Do you want to build and live in a place that's affordable?" The affordable place is inside the urban envelope; it's not outside it. I think these are choices that we have to make not only for us but for our children and our grandchildren—and, dare I say, utilize the Indigenous

principal: Plan for seven generations. We don't do that; we're stuck on this four-year cycle.

For goodness' sakes, what kind of a place do you want your children and your grandchildren to live in? I want mine to live in a place where they can live in a house that's affordable. I want them to eat food that's produced close to them—

Mr. Mike Harris: Mark, we have, unfortunately, a limited amount of time, but we can most certainly carry on this conversation at another date.

I wanted to just pivot over to Tim quickly. You had mentioned high interest rates being a barrier to building housing. Can you talk a little bit about that—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): One minute.

Mr. Mike Harris: —and what you're hoping to see in regard to the Bank of Canada over the next little while, in bringing those interest rates down?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yes, thank you. Through you, Chair, to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga: I'd love to see all parties chase after the federal government and the Bank of Canada. The interest rates have been too high for too long. They promised us, right, that if inflation got out of control, they would lower rates so first-time buyers could get into the market, move-up buyers could refinance and free up that single-family home, and they betrayed that trust. Inflation is under control. You take out, Chair, costs from rental and from mortgages that are artificially inflated by interest rates—it's down around 2%.

So, while governments can make good initiatives to get more homes built, you've got the Bank of Canada rolling in the wrong direction. I would love to see more voices saying, "Get interest rates down. Let people get in the market."

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Okay, thank you very much.

We'll now go to MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the presenters, all of you, for coming in and speaking today. I know you have a very busy schedule. I have some questions for Mark Reusser and Tim from OREA.

My questions are to Mark first. The province gave municipalities targets to do its part to address the housing shortage. So, each municipality had to agree to build a certain number of homes within a certain period of time or at least approve building starts. Has Waterloo met its housing targets?

Mr. Mark Reusser: They have not, although I will say that there are currently 30,000 approved lots in Waterloo region that have not been built on. That is not the fault of the municipality. The municipality has done all its due diligence and has provided those approvals. Other issues, including interest rates, have gotten in the way. So, I would suggest that—place the blame in the appropriate place. Don't place it on municipalities that have done their job and done it well.

Ms. Jessica Bell: We were pleased to see that the government is introducing a use-it-or-lose-it policy in this

bill to give municipalities the tools to motivate developers who are sitting on land to begin building.

My second question—and this is again to you, Mark—is, what do you think of the move in Bill 185 to permit appeals for municipalities that say no to low density on farmland, but the government is banning appeals if a municipality says yes to low density on farmland? So, essentially, if a municipality says yes to sprawl, you can't appeal it, and if a municipality says no to sprawl, a developer can appeal it. Do you have a position on that?

Mr. Mark Reusser: Well, my fellow presenter here has talked about frivolous appeals, and frivolous appeals are always an issue, but I will suggest that third-party appeals are incredibly necessary in our democratic society. They're the relief valve for people who disagree—so important to have that third-party appeal. If it's limited only to developers, it's grossly unfair.

For goodness' sakes, allow the public to participate in the process and appeal. There may be ones that are frivolous—OLT has the power to throw those out—but deal with the ones that are legitimate because they are legitimate. It's not only good for us; it's good for the government to have a relief valve. Keep third-party appeals.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for that.

Asquith, I have a question for you, too, so I'm going to get to Tim and then Asquith.

Okay, my second question is to Tim. Thank you so much for coming here. We know that you sat on the Housing Affordability Task Force that the government established. What are some recommendations that were put forward by the Housing Affordability Task Force that you would like the government to move forward on?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'd like to thank MPP Bell. Thank you for your work on the housing side. We really like what you're doing around strata housing, as well—a new ownership model that I talked about earlier on that will create more affordable options—so, continued success.

I'll emphasize three that are in the Housing Affordability Task Force that have not yet been implemented. You start heading, Chair, in the direction the government is in Bill 185, allowing water and waste water to be done as utilities—so, it's paid by users over time, amortized like you would a mortgage. This is the way, in Ontario, we build hydroelectricity through our LDCs and the way we build natural gas, so you should do that for water and sewer. If you don't, it's \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 on top of the price of a home for that buyer. If you spread the cost across many, many, years, that will knock that off the price.

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Number two is allowing fourplexes as of right. I addressed that earlier on. This really is going to be the key to home ownership for many, many first-time buyers and for empty nesters.

Third and finally, we really need to upzone along major transportation corridors. There is a fundamental shift that has taken place in the use of commercial properties in a hybrid work model. There's not as much demand on commercial usage. We're seeing more products shifted away

from retail. So, where you can, converting commercial buildings into residential or mixed use, MPP Bell, I think that will make a really big difference. It's environmentally friendly too—I know it's an issue that you stand for—because it's already serviced. It's existing buildings. That would really open the door to home ownership as well, Chair.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. We will introduce an amendment to allow fourplexes as right, and I'm looking forward to seeing how the government will be voting on that. My hope is that you vote yes.

My final question is to Asquith. Thank you so much for coming here. What are the top two things that the government can do to spur the construction of purpose-built rental?

Mr. Asquith Allen: Oh, jeez. Just two? As-of-right zoning for purpose-built rental is one. Zoning is one of the key pieces that adds to the time and, because time is money in our business, the cost of building.

The other is some form of density bonus—and I don't mean going back to the Monty Hall chequebook-planning, section 37 process. I mean something that is more set in stone, where you can know what you're applying, know what you're getting, and have a set price you can build into your pro forma for that. Those would be the two biggest pieces off the top of my head.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to all of you for coming in. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Okay—1.4 left. MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mark, just to going back to Wilmot: We can't let this continue; it's such a dangerous precedent. When farmers find out that any government can do this to them, basically take their land without consultation, without due process, without any transparency—I think what's happening in Wilmot is ground zero for irresponsible land use planning.

Where do you see the point of trust being rebuilt in this relationship?

Mr. Mark Reusser: I'll answer it in this way: Being a farmer, one of the things I do is invest in my land and infrastructure on my land. One of the reasons why I feel comfortable doing that is because of the security and the permanence of things like a countryside line. The particular piece of land you're talking about now is owned by five farmers. They are now thinking that even if there is no development there—are they going to invest one cent in tile drainage on that land or a farm building or a grain bin or anything else, when they can never be assured again that this won't happen tomorrow?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Even if we win, we lose, because it has shifted that relationship between regional and provincial government—

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Thank you very much.

We'll now go to the government. MPP—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Rae.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Chair. It has been a long day.

Thank you to the presenters for coming in, and those who joined us virtually. My question is to FRHPO. Thank you for your presentation. I was just wondering: I know our government changed the rent control exemption, as I'm sure you're very well aware. In your opinion in your association, do you believe that is beneficial to getting more purpose-built rentals built in Ontario?

Mr. Asquith Allen: Yes. The numbers indicate that fairly well. I don't have them here in front of me, but since bringing back those provisions in, I want to say, November 2018, we have seen a pretty sizable increase in the number of housing starts.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you.

I defer to MPP Hogarth.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): MPP Hogarth.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I know I have to be on TV soon. First of all, I want to thank everyone for being here. It's a really interesting discussion, and it goes back to my days when I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing.

My first question, actually, is for you, Tim—if you don't mind me calling you Tim, of course—from OREA and your comments about what the government can do. You mentioned co-ownership, and I'm really intrigued by that. Back in 2019, we passed a private member's bill about the Golden Girls Act. I know my colleague from Burlington north—

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Oakville North.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Oakville North—what is it?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Oakville North—Burlington.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: —Oakville North—Burlington—I should get that correct—was involved with that as well. It changed the Planning Act to allow seniors to live together, and I think it's a great opportunity and a great model. Can you just explain a little bit what co-ownership is? Is it similar to the private members' bill? It was Bill 69, the Golden Girls Act. Is that what that is? Is it similar?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yes. I thank the parliamentary assistant for the question. Of course, the Golden Girls Act was that—Golden Girls was way before your time. You probably don't remember; that was a TV show in the 1980s. I might, Chair, if it's okay with you—our president-elect, Cathy Polan, could speak about this, what she sees in small town, if we have the time.

Look, co-ownership allows many people like seniors living together to have a stake in the home. Shared equity models would allow an outside investor—it could be a pension fund, it could be the government, it could be an individual investment fund—to co-own the home, and then, that helps sort of get into the market by helping with the down payment. And then, when the home is sold down the road, they get a share of the profits from that. So it helps you get into the marketplace. It's kind of like a modern rent-to-own.

The third one I'd stress, Chair, is using government land to target housing for first-time buyers and quality

rentals. They did this in New York City with government land there—160,000 homes were built in that kind of model.

Cathy, did you want to add to that?

Ms. Cathy Polan: I just think in small towns—I would consider mine one of the smaller towns in the ones that I service—we're seeing multi-generational homes more so than people living together. I myself have my parents in an in-law suite in my house, while my father—he's 88 years old. It's easy for me to go down and see how he's doing and make sure that he eats every day. So I think in small towns, cities or towns, we're seeing more multi-generational than friends living with friends.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Interesting. We see a lot of that in my community as well. People are actually purchasing their parents' home and then either moving their parents into a side or building a suite in the back or buying them a condominium, just so they can live in their neighbourhoods. It's just a model that works for people because, as we know, we need to build 1.5 million homes, and we shouldn't leave anything off the table. There are a lot of ways we can get this done and I just want to thank both of you for your advocacy towards this and helping us get these homes built and built quick.

I know we have a problem with interest rates, as you've mentioned. Now—I don't remember your name, from FRPO.

Mr. Asquith Allen: Asquith.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Asquith, do you have any comments on interest rates or what's happening right now as we're trying to get shovels in the ground when it comes to building rental homes?

Mr. Asquith Allen: Definitely a big impediment, as I said in my remarks—the starts aren't where we would like them to be, and definitely, you would see some changes if rates came down.

I had attended the Canadian Apartment Investment Conference, which is usually in September, back in September 2022, and that's when we started to see the escalation from the Bank of Canada. It was almost like pin-drop silence in the room because that same morning, we had the rate increase that was announced, and you

could hear, almost, the projects get put on to the shelf as that announcement was made.

There are many factors that go into building rentals and ensuring as much fixed costs on the pro forma as opposed to variable costs is key. Interest rates being what they are now is definitely problematic in terms of getting projects over the finish line and to application.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: In my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, you see a lot of cranes in the air. We are building a lot of condominiums along the Queensway. We have Humber Bay Shores along Lakeshore, and then some of these developments are stalled, so now we're seeing some holes in the ground. So we really want to make sure that we keep our interest rates down to get these projects moving so people can get a roof over their head.

Thank you again for being here today.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Two minutes. MPP Barnes.

Mr. Matthew Rae: We defer our time, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Okay. If there are no further questions from that, that concludes the questions for the panel. We thank the panel very much for taking the time to prepare and so ably come and put your positions forward.

That concludes our presentations for today. Are there any comments or questions before we conclude? MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move that the committee enter closed session for the purpose of organizing committee business.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Okay. There's no debate on that, so with—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Oh, it's debatable. Discussion on the motion? It's the adjournment that's not debatable.

Any discussion? If not, are you ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. We'll break while we go in camera.

The committee recessed at 1743 and later continued in closed session.

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