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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

HE-42

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

Regional governance

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Thursday 11 January 2024

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

HE-42

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

Gouvernance régionale

1<sup>re</sup> session  
43<sup>e</sup> législature

Jeudi 11 janvier 2024

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Chair: Laurie Scott  
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott  
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# CONTENTS

Thursday 11 January 2024

Regional governance .....	HE-919
Town of Oakville; Ms. Marsha Paley; Halton region .....	HE-919
Mr. Rob Burton	
Mr. Gary Carr	
Ms. Marianne Meed Ward; Mr. Paul Sharman; Mr. Rory Nisan .....	HE-928
Ms. Anne Marsden .....	HE-937



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Thursday 11 January 2024

Jeudi 11 janvier 2024

*The committee met at 1001 in Burlington Convention Centre, Burlington.*

**REGIONAL GOVERNANCE**

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Good morning, everyone. If you could please all be seated, we are about to start the study on regional governance as overseen by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Thank you all for coming. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order.

We are meeting in the city of Burlington to conduct public hearings on the study on regional governance. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcasting and recording services. Please wait until I recognize you before you start speaking and, as always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we start?

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

**TOWN OF OAKVILLE  
MS. MARSHA PALEY  
HALTON REGION**

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** I will now call upon the town of Oakville, Marsha Paley and Halton region. You will have seven minutes for your presentation, and you may begin. I also ask, please, that before you start your remarks, you state your name for the record.

The town of Oakville, I'll give you the floor.

**Mr. Rob Burton:** Good morning. My name is Rob Burton. I'm the mayor of the town of Oakville. I thank the committee for the chance to discuss with you current opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of municipal services.

Since my submission to the committee on November 6, the government has reversed its decision to dissolve Peel region. I appreciate the opportunity to share my personal suggestions in the context in which the committee operates now.

My main message to the committee is that taxpayers in Oakville are not well served by being part of a two-tier government. Oakville pays 42% of the bills of Halton for a third or so of Halton's population. I don't believe that's sustainable nor fair. Regional government, in my opinion, was not put in place to have taxpayers in one community subsidize those in another in perpetuity.

The Municipal Act sets out two measures for municipal performance: first, to be efficient; second, to be effective. I take that to mean we are all required to always be improving delivery of municipal services. If dissolution is not an option, surely improvements to efficiency and effectiveness are still worth discussion.

An Oakville staff report last year shows there is a viable pathway for Oakville to be a more effective and efficient municipality as a single-tier, but the report also shows that services Halton region provides could be delivered not only by the town of Oakville or through a joint delivery model with other municipalities that doesn't require the systemic delays in housing that are the essential feature or flaw of having two layers of politicians and two municipal councils over planning and infrastructure.

The Oakville staff report also demonstrates a pathway for significant efficiency and effectiveness through internal reform in the region if the committee recommends maintaining a two-tier system. Namely, why not move the overlapping responsibilities in the following eight services to the local level: (1) roads, (2) stormwater, (3) forestry, (4) economic development, (5) planning services, (6) contact centre, (7) parks and (8) recreation and culture? Staff's rationale for recommending those services be locally delivered is to remove duplication and inefficiencies. It would also improve transparency and accountability.

My recommendations and those of Oakville staff are beneficial to not just Oakville, but also Burlington, Milton and Halton Hills. These are all mature communities. Oakville and Burlington are among the largest in the province. With over 130,000 residents, Milton is roughly the same size as Guelph, Kingston, Thunder Bay and Brantford—they're all single-tier municipalities. Halton Hills has more than 62,000 residents, similar to municipalities like Belleville,

North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie—again, all single-tier. Each municipality in Halton could rightfully stand on its own as single-tier governments with shared services covered by contracts. We work well as neighbours, and have for close to 50 years. I have no doubt we could reach mutually beneficial service-sharing agreements if needed.

If a decision is made to keep the region, moving growth-servicing responsibility down to the lower-tier municipalities or out to shared service boards or utilities makes financial sense for taxpayers and will be essential to protect taxpayers and meet or exceed our housing targets. While each municipality in Halton is mature, each has different appetites for servicing. We know our communities best. Giving each municipality the ability to independently choose service levels would allow each to tailor delivery levels to their communities' needs and wants, and deliver with more efficiency and effectiveness for the taxpayers.

In my opinion, the status quo is not working for taxpayers in Halton region, nor for the housing crisis. There are inherent delays from having an upper regional council overlay on the mature cities of Halton region. These delays are unavoidable and unsustainable, and inefficient and ineffective. They're also hard for the public to follow and understand.

I remain hopeful and optimistic that we can all do better together. Thank you for your ongoing work to improve municipal service delivery.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you, Mayor Burton, for your presentation.

The next presenter we have is Marsha Paley. Marsha, I will give you a 30-second warning when you're near the end of your presentation, just so that you know it's coming.

**Ms. Marsha Paley:** To Chair Scott and members of the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy: Thank you for the opportunity to present. My name is Marsha Paley. Before I get to the heart of my statement, it may be helpful to offer to some extent why I'm here. Although I am a member of several professional organizations, for this matter I am representing as an individual, and although I was not going to provide any names of specific municipalities, I will state one in a minute.

**1010**

Currently a resident of one of the regional governments under review, I am also a staff member at another regional government, one where until recently "dissolution" was a commonly used word. Now it will be "efficiency review," at least for several core services.

For five years in the region where I live—the one where we are meeting at this point—I chaired, as a volunteer, a standing advisory committee. For 24 years plus, I have worked in municipal governments in land use planning and then as a clerk and a chief administrative officer. This work has mainly been in lower-tier or local area municipalities in south and central Ontario, so within an upper-tier municipality at either one of three counties or a region.

For this presentation, I am a certified municipal officer, a registered professional planner with a master's in public administration and a background in business, and it will all make sense in a moment. Hopefully, such experience

and background might offer some credibility to the insights and efficiencies I will identify for the regional governance study being undertaken and beyond into other facets of municipal governance—possibly a proposal for a transformative framework for municipal governance change.

According to AMO, as the committee is aware, regional governments, many who are celebrating 50 years of existence this year, are a federation of the local or lower-tier municipalities and often referred to as upper-tier municipalities. The services they offer at this time include:

- arterial roads;
- health and social services;
- regional scale or region-wide land use planning and development;
- policing and paramedics;
- sewer and water systems; and
- transit.

They provide a system-based approach to these matters, linking together local municipalities, conservation authorities and other organizations; funding or cost-sharing programs and projects.

The province undertook a similar review in 2019 of the eight regions and their lower-tier municipalities, with no changes being proposed. Similarly, a county government is a federation of those local municipalities but offers fewer services than the regions. These, at present, exist only in southern Ontario. Local municipalities within counties provide the majority of municipal services to their residents and often include arterial roads, health and social services, and county land use planning, though not all services and they differ between municipalities.

Until four and a half years ago, when I began working at the region of Peel, my perspective was as an academic, a volunteer and from that of a local municipal staff person when it came to upper-tier municipalities. I have worked for some mayors and councils who recognize the need for and support an upper-tier level of government, while others do not. Councils and staff play an important role in the running of municipalities, though there can also be the cause for challenges without aligned values, goals, guidance and oversight.

My current workplace is well-deserving of the many awards it has won. My experience is of a professional, responsive workplace like no other I have had the joy to work in. Unfortunately, given the process over the last year, the loss of numerous qualified staff, who have taken with them years of corporate knowledge and loyalty, is having short-term and may have longer-term impacts on the workplace.

As both a resident of this province and a region, I am concerned about the potential costs that poorly informed decision-making is having on the quality and provision of services that have been or should be provided by municipal governments. Like a shoe that does not fit every foot, every municipality is different, and like a chain whose weakest link needs support, we need to consider our current costliest issues, arisen as a result of, and the need to revisit or reimagine a new municipal governance framework with a more consistent structure and approach. For that goal, I

hope to bring to the table today—and I did provide an electronic version of my submission—the start of a transformative framework that lays a foundation for more consistency and more stability; an opportunity for collaboration among academics, builders, developers, all municipalities, the public, politicians, related organizations and others to work together for a better Ontario in housing and infrastructure.

For me, the three top current costliest or weakest links include housing, infrastructure and the tax base or development charges.

I won't go through in detail, but for the purposes of the housing category, we are currently not meeting the needs of the lower and middle class. When a salary of a family is within the low-income range yet they cannot find a permanent home, then we as professionals and the federal, provincial and local governments are not fulfilling our responsibilities to this province's residents with respect to housing. Maybe we need to start using a word like "affordable," rather than "affordable" or "attainable," where a home is both affordable and attainable for each of the income levels—though, at this time, being more focused on the lower and low-to-middle income, where most housing is currently needed.

I'm going to focus on infrastructure because of my experience. One matter of significant concern is infrastructure. In my career, I have seen, and continue to see, a system of costly issues with bridges, roads, sewage and water systems needing emergency repair due to long-delayed and overdue maintenance.

The following three examples all happened in lower-tier municipalities where I worked: A water reservoir upon which a community depended on for clean water was left for decades unclean with needed repairs to stop potentially future contamination, long after the Walkerton inquiry, and a situation actually identified by MOE staff as a possible Walkerton 2.0—why did it take a Ministry of the Environment order for a municipality to do something not done in previous decades—a sewage collection pond with decades of sewage build-up needing a cleanup or facing a loss of capacity to continue to receive sewage, requiring either a new pond or removal of sewage and haulage to an appropriate waste facility, both costly ventures; and a bridge on a highway with falling concrete—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Marsha Paley:** —highlighted by falling blocks of concrete while transport trucks continued to drive overhead.

The tax base: We are looking at annual budget increases of 7% to 14%, so please reconsider the proposed changes to development charges.

The ideas I would like to put forward include amalgamation for some municipalities; a list of best practices, including asset management plans, a municipal performance management system, data collection and dashboards—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you, Marsha, for your presentation.

I'd like to call upon Halton region to present.

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome. Welcome to Halton region and to Burlington. My

name is Gary Carr. I'm the Halton regional chair. I have been the Halton regional chair since 2006. I also was a member of the Legislative Assembly from 1990 to 2003. I was the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature from 1999 to 2003. I was also a member of federal Parliament in the 2000s.

I know today that the minister has asked you to do two things. He has asked you to look at the service delivery and whether it supports achieving 1.5 million homes. He's also asked you to look at efficiencies of the region. I want to tell this committee very clearly that the minister's questions from Halton region—the answer to both of these questions is a resounding categorical, "Yes, we can get you the numbers that you need," and I'll discuss that further. When you see the efficiencies, you'll see how we operate.

What will be important today is looking at the booklet that we gave you. If you look at the booklet, on page 4, you will see the services that we provide. You will see that there are only two slight ones with overlap. Every other of the services is either provided at the local level or the federal level. And the two that are, they're economic development and the other one is the parks, but in the parks' case, what happens is the region got those parks way back from the federal government. We put a lot of money into them—which we've just done in Oakville and turned it over to the town of Oakville, and we're putting millions of dollars into the park in Burlington. And then, because they do parks, we will turn it over.

So if you look at that chart, you will see all of the services we provide. They include and are not limited to the ones that are outlined, and you will see we do public health. We do paramedic services. We do policing. We do waste management. We do water treatment and delivery. We do waste water. We do social services. We do housing. We do long-term care. We do children services. We do roads. And we mentioned the two that were there in economic development and the parks, which has been turned over.

Now, Halton is a beautiful region, as you can see. We've got the beautiful lake in the south. We've got the gorgeous escarpment in the north. We have over 600,000 people in our community; 14,000 businesses; and our council which is represented—and we've got a number of them here today—by all four mayors. Of course, it's Milton, Burlington, Halton Hills and Oakville that are our communities. Each of the mayors sit on there, as well as the council of 19. I sit on there as well.

**1020**

If you look at those services, you will see very clearly that we provide an excellent service. We deliver all of the services that are listed in an efficient and cost-effective manner. I will go through some of the things for you here today.

As we do our annual strategic plan, we do a poll of the public, and we've done this every four years when we do our strategic plan. Each and every year our poll has an approval rating of each of the residents of 97%. With all due respect to other municipalities of any level of any political stripe, there are no governments that can say they

got a 97% approval rating. And what we did is we actually went through them. We went through public health, we went through paramedics, and we asked the same question. So, the people of Halton region realize they've got great services at the region.

We also have a AAA credit rating. We've had that for a number of years, both Standard and Poor's and Moody's, and that's important, as you'll see, because we are talking about capital in the billions of dollars. I want to be very clear: Without the region, our local municipalities will not be able to borrow the money to be able to put the infrastructure in place to build their portion of the homes. It just will not be done. We have a AAA credit rating that allows us the advantage to be able to do that.

We've also had a tax rate of 1.4% over the last number of years, so we continue to offer those services. On top of that, we are very proud of the fact that we are the safest regional municipality in all of Canada and we have been since 2006. That's extremely important. If you look on page 12 of our documents, you'll see how we do it. Our community and safety plan works with all of the residents, and you'll see the groups that we are dealing with there, and because we have the fine Halton Regional Police Service and all of our partners, we are able to say we are the safest region.

Halton region has brought strong—working with our local municipalities, we have moved services up. We've moved services and we can't continue to do that, but we want to make that decision in Halton region.

I'll give you one example. In the 1980s, waste management was given to the regions. We have a landfill site in Milton right now which is part of our waste management program, but that was given to regional municipalities. So, we can move services around, look up and down. Presently, council has asked, through a motion of the council, to look at doing transit at the region as well.

I also want to say, and the mayor talked about the planning earlier, Bill 23 takes planning away. I want to be very clear to all of you: Bill 23 gives planning to local municipalities. Halton region was the first municipality to get, when it was brought to council, a council-endorsed plan for transferring planning to the municipalities. That's been done, so the municipalities will plan and they will put in the infrastructure and all of those other services. We were the first ones to do that and we're proud of the fact that now the local municipalities will do the planning. As they say to all the mayors and councillors, "You tell us where you want the houses to be built and we will make sure that you get the taps to turn on and the toilets to flush."

Over the last 10 years, we've had a record of success. We've had the biggest growth of any municipality, including some of you who are in the GTA, on a percentage basis. We've grown by 19%—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty-second warning.

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Sorry?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Mr. Gary Carr:** So I want to say very clearly, and I'll wrap up with the 30 seconds that's left here, and I want to

specifically talk to the committee here. What we're saying to each of you is we want you to consider to leave Halton region alone. It's a system that works well. We are one of the ones that operate efficiently. We will continue to do that. And let me be very clear: If you do not have Halton region, you will not get the homes built that you would like to see to meet your 1.5-million pledge.

Thank you very much for having us here today. We look forward to the questions, and good luck to all of you. We truly appreciate all the work you do for our communities.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you, Gary Carr, regional chair, for that presentation. And thank you to all the presenters.

This round of questions, we'll start questions with the official opposition, starting right now. I recognize Sandy Shaw.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you to all three of the presenters today. I really appreciate the information that you bring here. These are difficult decisions to make, and so our role here is to listen and to hear what you have to say, because you all know your communities and represent your communities, and we respect that as fellow elected officials that are doing the same. So thank you for being here.

I'd like to start my questioning, if that's okay, with Chair Carr. Now, I just have to say, I googled you while we were talking to see when you served at the council. Were you a goalie for the Boston Bruins?

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Yes, I played pro hockey for six years.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I could spend most of my time talking about Bobby Orr, but we won't do that, right—Or Don Cherry. So that was—congratulations. But what I was looking for, when I found that information, is, were you serving as an MPP in the Conservative government and were you there when Hamilton went through the experience of what we called "forced amalgamation" at the time?

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Yes, I was. I was an MPP from 1990 to 2003. Through that whole period after 1995, I was there.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I'm curious on your views on that. Believe it or not, I knock on doors in Ancaster and Dundas, and it still rankles people. They still have stickers on their doors saying they're not appreciative of that. And my understanding of it, although I haven't looked lately, is that one of the reasons at the time was efficiencies and to save tax dollars.

There are studies that said that, in fact, there were no efficiencies, that it actually cost a lot of money to do that amalgamation. I don't know now, many years later, how efficient that is. Do you have any thoughts to share on that experience—the opposite experience, which was a forced amalgamation at the time. Because it was pretty controversial.

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Yes, thank you. First of all, the hockey analogy—yes, so I played pro hockey. I was a goaltender, so I would always refer that I was always getting shot at when I was a goalie and I still do in my political career. But you mentioned Don Cherry. I was with the Bruins during that period of time. He was the coach on the big team. I never made it to the NHL because he knew very well to make sure that he never put Gary Carr in the Boston

net. He was a good coach. So I had about six years down there, as well as with Quebec.

But I did want to touch on this because I wanted to show you where I think some of the perils may be for Halton. I was there, and I'll relate a bit of a story. The Conservatives held that riding with a wonderful guy by the name of Toni Skarica, who went on to become—he's now a judge and he was a prosecutor at the time. They won that riding in 1995, and Toni Skarica said that he didn't want to do the amalgamation.

They came in after 1995 and did amalgamation. He won very handily in 1995, and I remember, six months later, after they did the amalgamation, he quit and stepped down. And a good friend of mine, Ted McMeekin, who is a wonderful man—you all know him, just wonderful. He was a whip when I was the Speaker. He came in six months later. So they won their riding, and six months after the amalgamation, they lost it. And the reason they lost it wasn't so much that they cared about Dundas or whatever. What they cared about was there was a 22% tax increase to the people in what they called the suburbs at that time. And you heard that in Peel as well. The reason they backed down on that was that there were massive tax increases by getting rid of the region of Peel, and it was done by financial reports to publicly financed companies. So there would be massive tax increases; that's what people cared about.

And when we looked through the other amalgamation, in 2019—and we had a council resolution. The mayor supported keeping the regions in the two-tier at that time. I said to all of the ministers I met with, "If you go and do this, you'd better be careful on the financial side, because people care about the tax increases." And you saw that in Peel and one of the reasons they had to make the changes. So if you go ahead, if it was the same in Peel, it would be the same in Halton region. And what will happen in the next case—I'd never dare say to you win or lose elections because it's very presumptuous of me, but if you change and you have tax increases, I tell you this: People will remember it. So be very, very careful.

Right now, with Halton region, you've got it operating efficiently. Why would you want to make the changes to come with some scheme that you may be able to have come up, that somebody may propose, that may cost you? Very clearly, it was bad at that period of time and a lot of people lost their seats because of that amalgamation.

1030

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Absolutely. I'll just share with you that Ted McMeekin was the MPP before me and so I'm very familiar with Ted McMeekin. He is a great guy. I'm sure you've heard a lot of his Bobby Kennedy stories as well.

I support what you're saying for Hamilton. I don't know the experience of other municipalities, but as I said, people still remember, and there's also a hangover, if you will, from that forced amalgamation in Hamilton, which is called "area rating." Because of the amalgamation and the distribution of services, some communities, like Ancaster and perhaps even Stoney Creek—not so much Dundas, but Ancaster and Stoney Creek and Flamborough don't have the same kinds of services. They don't have transit services

to the extent that the lower tier or lower part—I don't mean tier of government; there's actually a mountain escarpment in Hamilton, so below the escarpment in Hamilton.

So there's still this, what do we do with area rating? And that's gone on for, I don't know, 20 years now, and because the decision was seen as unfair for these communities to pay the same amount of taxation when they weren't receiving the same amount of services. This is an albatross that comes up all the time, and it's one of the reasons why it's made it very difficult for the city of Hamilton to grow our transit services to some of these outlying regions.

I appreciate your caution and I'm just bringing you the story that I have from Hamilton. Honestly, I believe that I'm the beneficiary of that rancour that lasts. I represent Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, and believe me, this is an issue, so I appreciate your caution.

How much time do I have left, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty-nine seconds.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Oh, okay, 39 seconds.

Thank you very much. In my second round, I'll ask some other questions, but again, it's really cool, you're not supposed to say "good," that you were—also, goalies are pretty unique, I have to say, so we can talk about goalies and drummers another time, as well. Thank you very much for your testimony here today.

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Well, thank you. A very quick point that I think would be helpful for one of the questions: I was the MPP for Oakville. They were looking at doing the amalgamations of Oakville, as well, and they were talking about Halton city. It was Joyce Savoline, who actually went on to be an MPP, as well. And Mike Harris came to me and he said, "You're the member for Oakville. Would you like to do an amalgamation?" Which was very good; it's always nice to have leaders come to you. And I said, "I will not support it, and if it comes to the Legislature, I will vote against it." And, to his credit, he didn't do it in Halton region and we continued on—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** I'm going to have to cut you off. Sorry, Regional Chair Carr.

We're going to move to the next round of questions, starting with the independent member. MPP McMahon, please, for seven and a half minutes.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Four and a half.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Excuse me, four and a half, yes.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I'm going to be very quick, and I expect you to be quick too.

Just quickly to Rob Burton: Thank you. Well, thank you to everyone for coming in and the audience. You have your spectators there and maybe more presenters. Happy New Year. Rob, this is the second time we're hearing from you on this issue, so it must be something you're passionate about, obviously. You mentioned that, currently, housing starts are impeded by this set-up. Could you elaborate on that briefly?

**Mr. Rob Burton:** I was referring to the inherent structural delay when you have planning of housing developments subject to two report processes, usually sequential, where you've got activity going on at the lower level and

then you go up to the upper level before you finally get it done, or—

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Except now the municipalities have carriage of the planning process, right?

**Mr. Rob Burton:** We will when that process is finished.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Yes, well, hopefully that's soon. Okay, that's what you're referring to. Great, thanks.

**Mr. Rob Burton:** I was referring to infrastructure.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay, great.

And now on to Marsha: You didn't get to finish your presentation. Would you like to do a little bit? Add to what—you were cut off a bit with the timing.

**Ms. Marsha Paley:** Through the Chair: If I could just wrap it up, I'd appreciate it.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Sure. You only have a couple of minutes.

**Ms. Marsha Paley:** I'll make it as brief as possible.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Yes, just very briefly, though.

**Ms. Marsha Paley:** Again, I did provide a copy available online. I just want to highlight: There were seven or eight items of ideas, including the discussion on amalgamation and best practices with regard to a number of plans and efficiencies. Some of them have been identified, including asset management plans, municipal performance management, the data collection issue, strategic plans, value-for-money audits. Also, speaking to change management; the need for effective oversight by both upper-tier municipalities and the province; the idea about efficiency reviews potentially being undertaken by the upper-tier municipalities first before an independent appraiser. I highlight land use planning just because I am one; the need for leadership; and the need for sustained engagement, consultation and communication.

If you don't mind, I'll just conclude that in bringing forward this presentation, my rationale was to ensure as a resident that any costs would not all be borne by taxpayers—as Regional Chair Carr mentioned, your electors. As a municipal government staff person, it would certainly help offer certainty and stability in those core services that are offered by upper-tier and local municipalities. There is an opportunity for this committee to provide a framework to transform, though to do it in a way that provides this provincial government accountability, collaboration, cost-effectiveness and transparency while working with upper-tier and local municipalities throughout the province.

Again, best wishes on the remainder and I thank you for the consideration of the perspective. The idea is, let's do a reimagining or revisiting of upper-tiers. I think there are opportunities to improve and enhance and I can go through a number of examples, but I think the opportunity is here and now and I mirror many of the comments that Regional Chair Carr has provided to you.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** That's great. So you are thinking there can be a framework for a bit of transformation, reimagining and revisiting; that it's not 100% perfect but pretty good the way it is. So why rock the boat, especially during a housing crisis? That's another concern.

But can you give me an example of that, like what collaboration or something that could be—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Oh, 30 seconds.

**Ms. Marsha Paley:** I'll make it quick.

As a planner, right now I've been working with the town of Caledon with regard to a settlement area boundary expansion, our 2051 new urban area. There's an opportunity for upper-tier municipalities to provide a scope of planning that local municipalities would be potentially unable to provide and, as a result, we are doing a cost-sharing project for planning to assist the local municipalities, that additional work.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you. I have to cut that short. Thank you so much for all your comments.

Next, we'll move to questions for the government side, and I will recognize MPP Triantafilopoulos.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Good morning, all, and welcome to Burlington and to Halton. I want to thank, in particular, regional chair Gary Carr and Oakville mayor Rob Burton for your leadership, partnership and collaboration with the government of Ontario. We very much appreciate being allies as we move forward on a very big challenge our province faces, particularly in terms of building 1.5 million new homes.

I'd also like to thank Ms. Marsha Paley for joining us. It's important to be able to have citizens come and delegate before these committees and provide your advice and insights and probably some solutions from time to time that we have not considered, so thank you for being here.

My first question is to Mayor Burton. I want to thank you specifically for your partnership because you and your council have worked very collaboratively with us. Now, you spoke specifically about what you saw as a viable pathway as a single-tier municipality, so can you expand on what you think that would look like—what the biggest challenge would be facing the town of Oakville today within our two-tier municipal government structure in meeting our needs to be able to build more homes?

**Mr. Rob Burton:** Thank you very much for the question. I brought copies of the staff report on which I based my presentation and I think my assistant could hand those out and you could look at them later. That will help flesh out the answer to your question.

First, I want to say I am very proud of the leadership role that I took in 2019 to persuade the provincial government that amalgamation into a city of Halton was not the right path. It was very important to me and, I think, to my residents that the identity of Oakville be preserved. We are a community that's 200 years old and we like each other, and we don't really want to be part of a bigger city.

**1040**

There's kind of a straddle going on between being a lower-tier municipality and part of an upper-tier municipality. It's a hybrid, if you will. You're a local city and you're a big city, right? So you're two things at once.

When I looked at the dissolution of Peel, it occurred to me that the opportunity—if we followed what Darcy McKeough told us to do when he set up regional government, which was to continue to evolve, and he specified that certain things would evolve into possibly bigger things. So, some of the things that we do at the region, like police and infrastructure—to name the two really big ones. The rest of what we do is pretty much a local administration office for provincial services, if you look at ODSP and OW and so on.

Some of these things could be done through service boards or utilities. Take infrastructure, for example: I think a utility model recommends itself there. It would be more businesslike. Utilities could finance infrastructure through debt and rates, and we could end a big chunk of the need for development charges if we went down that path. And those utilities—there's no real reason to make them geographically bound, or political boundaries bound. They could be more regional. They could be more topographic. They could be more efficient. Anyway, that's that.

The part that I identify as the most difficult is: There's this up-down process that goes on when you're trying to build houses because you've got two political entities with their hands in the dough. It just strikes me that, although it's welcome, we're moving planning down. I would note that until the matter of dealing with the regional official plan's contents getting into the local official plans, which has not been done—until that's done, I'm not sure you could say that planning has been fully devolved down to the local level. That is a nut that I'm not sure people have figured out how yet to crack.

When it comes to infrastructure, we've recently had several examples in front of us where it was just very clear to me that because major regional infrastructure was a matter that was out of our hands, we had to wait until the region figured out its plan rather than proceeding to have our own plan.

I am just as proud today as I was in 2019 of the ability of the region to perform efficiently and effectively under my friend Chair Gary Carr. We both came into local municipal politics in 2006 together and he has run a lean and effective operation, but I believe that everything can be made better.

When I read Darcy McKeough's book and delved into the research that I did—the history of it—I noticed that he said we should always be evolving. In business, I took the view—I'm the founder of YTV, and my brag there is it's the first Canadian television network not to go bankrupt on launch. I took the view that constantly evolving incrementally to the better is a good thing to do. Certainly, it's worked for me.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Thank you. I also want to note that—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Congratulations on meeting the housing starts for Oakville by about 71% of the total housing starts.

Do we have any more time, Chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** No, 19 seconds. There will be another round of questions.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** I wanted to ask a question to the chair as well. Sorry. We're going to have to pass.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Okay. Now we have another round of questions for MPP Shaw, with seven and a half minutes.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I wanted to ask my questions to Ms. Paley. Thank you for being here. As everyone said, it's really refreshing. It sounded like you work for the region of Peel. I did also for a short time in my career. I was working in the planning department doing GIS planning. I had a little bit of a window into the operations of regional government, so I take some of your comments.

What I want to talk about, really, is some of the things that you mentioned. You didn't get a chance to go into depth about it, but you did touch on the idea that municipalities have lost a source of revenue through the development charges, talking specifically about Bill 23. I note that AMO, for example, and FCM have said that this loss of revenue will significantly impact all municipalities, whether they're regional governments or single-tier, in their ability to achieve the 1.5 million homes that we need, and we agree that we need to be building those homes as quickly as possible.

I'm wondering if you could just comment on the impact of Bill 23. This is a government that's asking municipalities to do their part but at the same time is taking away some of the resources and revenue that they'll need to do that. I find it hard to square that. And the second of piece of this, if you want to talk about it, is—you used the word “affordainable”—how do I say it? You coined a new phrase. Because we in the official opposition NDP are of the mind that, yes, absolutely, we need to build homes as quickly as possible—all kinds of homes—but also that people can't afford to live in these homes. So if you want to comment on those two aspects, the loss of revenue through Bill 23 and the fact that the housing that we need to build needs to meet all housing needs.

**Ms. Marsha Paley:** Thank you for the question. Through the Chair, I'll respond. If you don't mind, I'll actually respond to the first question first.

I happened to be driving home from Peel on Monday, and I was thinking about the terms “affordability” and “attainable.” And I discussed this when I was doing interviews with other council members, that we need to be looking at reasonably priced homes or housing dwellings for residents that they can afford. I'll just throw out some numbers that I had in my presentation. The official poverty line for a single person in 2022 was \$27,000. In mid-2023, the Canada Revenue Agency said the low-income level is \$33,000 to \$43,000 for a family with children. Based on that, an individual needs \$11,000 a year, or \$916 per month, to up to \$14,000 a year, or \$1,200 per month, on housing. When you hear that the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Ontario is \$2,336, there's a difference of \$1,100 alone for housing, so low-income residents are unable to afford to rent, let alone buy, a home. So I

think there needs to be a consideration that the homes have to be affordable as well as attainable.

I can indicate that there is a development happening at the end of our street which has been in for 60 years, and they brought forward indicating to council that it's going to be affordable housing. The homes are over a million dollars. It's affordable for someone, but it's not attainable for everyone. From an income perspective, I think we need to be looking at a combination of the two aspects and to be clear about the definition. I know Ontario is looking at that.

From the perspective of Bill 23, yes, there are certainly a number of impacts. I won't go through details, but I can definitely offer background put forward by OPPI and by a number of organizations, including the Canadian Institute of Planners. I also happen to sit on the city of Burlington's heritage advisory committee—there are a number of heritage aspects in Bill 23 that are having an impact—as both a staff person and a volunteer. From a cost perspective, there's a number of costs associated with it as well, everything from staff resources to, like I said, staff turnover; the cost of development charges, which are potentially having an impact on the opportunity for the affordability of those homes. There are so many aspects that are integrated that we need to look at it and, if I can ask, a reconsideration of the impacts of development charge changes. As I said, I could go into further detail, but I think my time is almost up.

1050

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Okay. Thank you very much for that, and I hope you don't mind but I'm going to use your new term in the Legislature, if that's okay. So if you guys hear it, you'll know it came—I'll say, "TM, Ms. Paley." So thank you for that.

Quickly, in the two minutes that remain, or less than, I'd like to ask Mayor Burton: You talked about the different services. I'm really interested to hear how you think paramedic services, particularly paramedic/policing services, which currently, I understand, are regionally delivered—in Hamilton, we have such a problem with our ambulances. We have what are called code zeros. Regularly, on a frightening basis, people call for an ambulance, and there is not one available to respond. We had a grandmother die in Hamilton waiting for an ambulance. This is literally a life-critical service, and it's currently struggling.

Can you explain to me how you would handle the paramedic services given already the context in which people are struggling to be able to—or, not struggling, but people can't always rely on the services to be there when they need them most.

**Mr. Rob Burton:** A few years ago when I thought I was having a heart attack, I had my staff phone 911. My fire department got to me first. I identify with the problem that you're describing. The solution is either to spend a whole lot more money on a whole lot more EMS—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Mr. Rob Burton:** —or to continue, as we do in Oakville, to train your fire crews to be competent to go to these calls

or to merge them and have EMS be part of fire, as I'm told does happen in some parts of the world.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you for that answer. I'm glad to hear that the firefighters got to you—there you go.

**Mr. Rob Burton:** I was glad for anybody to get there.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** But not me; I wouldn't be of use to you.

Thank you for your testimony, all of you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Now, we're going to go to the next round and independent member MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I agree; I love that new word, "affordatainable," and I think you should submit it to the Webster dictionary.

My questions are for the famous, or infamous, Gary Carr. The other month—I was going to say week, but it was months ago that we were in Barrie—Durham region spoke to us, and, boy, they had bragging rights for being the best region in the universe, actually. So I'm wondering if you care to compete with that and continue on with your stories of Halton running efficiently, running well and being an amazing place to live.

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that. As you could imagine, the chairs work well together. John is great; I go back with Roger, when he was there. I told the stories of being in the chair with Bill Fisch and Emil and now Nando, and we work together. Wayne and I are golfing buddies. I used to say to Bill and to the various chairs that I was like the younger brother—because we were a little bit smaller than the other regions, we learned from them, and we still work together very well and cooperate in a number of areas, plus they've all become good friends.

Relating to the paramedics and the delays, one of the problems with the delays are offloading delays. You all know this: Ambulances are stuck at the hospitals. We sometimes had the same thing; for eight hours, they would be stuck at the hospital—and this goes back to all governments. But what we did at the region was something different. We brought in and paid for nurses in the hospital to work on the offloading delay. The region dollars paid for that so that they were able to take the patients and free up our paramedics. That was a decision that was made at our region, to help our residents, to speed up the time that was there. We would not be able to do that if we didn't have Halton region, the councillors, the mayor and everybody else through the budgets. All the fine councillors behind me all said, "We are going to put money into it, and that will allow the paramedics to be able to be freed up." Those are the types of things that we do in constant improvement.

My final point, and my councillors will groan when they hear this, back to my hockey analogy: I won the Memorial Cup with the Toronto Marlboros. Our coach was George Armstrong, who of course was the last coach who won. For the Toronto Maple Leafs, for those of you who were too young, in 1967 he was the captain who skated around. What he used to say to me and to all of the players—and I use this with my staff—was, "You're only

as good as your last game.” His last game was with the Stanley Cup, skating around, and the Leafs have never won it again.

I say to our staff all the time, and to everybody, that even though we’re the best today, that doesn’t mean we’re going to be the best tomorrow. We’re going to constantly look at things, including stuff like the paramedics, listen to everybody and try to improve, because if you think you’re the best today, you might not be tomorrow. That’s where we want to be able to continue to do it with the fine men and women that serve us in our council, who are doing a great job. We want to make those decisions for those very, very vital services that are so important for the people of Halton region.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Amazing. All right. We’ve landed there. Thanks.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Okay. We’re going to move on to the next round of questions with the government side, and I will call on MPP Kusendova-Bashta.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Good morning, everyone. My first question will be to Regional Chair Carr. Thank you for your service, both at OLA and also as a hockey player. Our late mayor, Hazel McCallion—had you met her? I’m sure you had.

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** And had you shared any hockey love? I’m assuming.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** Okay. That’s wonderful.

Chair, your region is made up of Milton, Halton Hills, Burlington and Oakville. In terms of the housing starts, Oakville is at 71% for 2023, Milton at 75%, Halton Hills at 8% and Burlington at 12%. It seems like, at least in two of the cities, things are going well, and we’re hoping to see those numbers reach 100%. But what’s happening in Halton Hills and Burlington? Why are they so low on their housing starts?

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Basically, our numbers are this: We have to produce 92,500 homes, and in order to do that, the most important part is the infrastructure. As you know—or maybe you don’t know—all of our municipalities have met their pledges. Halton Hills, Oakville, Burlington and Milton have all said, “We are going to get our numbers and meet them.” And we have said to all of the councillors, all of the staff at the local level and all of the mayors, “We will put the infrastructure in place. You tell us where you want to build, and we will get you there.” You saw the numbers, where we had the biggest growth of any of the municipalities in the GTA, and we do have ones that are in the pipeline now.

The bottom line is, and where it is really important is that our capital on that is in the neighbourhood of, over the next few years, \$8 billion. I’ll reuse a bit of an example, and I think it’s public knowledge, so I’ll use York region: Way back a few years ago, when Bill Fisch was the chair of the region, they lost their AAA credit rating. Actually, it was the same number. They had an \$8-billion capital program, and they lost their AAA credit rating. The banks

said to them, “You are not going to be able to borrow \$8 billion,” and they cut them back to \$3 billion.

The reason I can say this publicly is because we were at a meeting of all of the chairs, and they talked about this with the developers. If you do not have a AAA credit rating, if you do not have the ability to borrow \$8 billion, Oakville, Burlington, Milton and Halton Hills, when they go into the banks and say, “We need billions of dollars to be able to put this infrastructure into place,” they’re going to laugh them out of the office. You need to have the ability to do that. We do at the region.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Speaking of infrastructure, in our recent fall economic statement, the government has announced a \$200-million fine for waste water infrastructure. Is the region intending to apply for that funding?

1100

**Mr. Gary Carr:** Yes, we’ll look at any of them and, as you know, ROMA is coming up. I have a meeting with the infrastructure minister, and we’ve been doing this with governments going way back. When I think back, we’ve worked with all of the ministers. We’ve got a meeting with the minister and, actually, we’re meeting with the municipal affairs minister on Tuesday, as well.

In each of those cases, we ask them what programs are there. Our staff come in and then we follow up later to be able—and thank you very much for supporting some of these programs.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Absolutely. We’ve also announced a \$1.2-billion Building Faster Fund, but those monies can only be allocated if the municipalities meet their targets at 100%. So it is really crucial that the levels of government work together to achieve those housing targets.

I have a few questions for Mayor Burton, as well. I quickly looked over your report. Thank you very much for submitting it. But the one thing that I didn’t see is property tax. Maybe it’s on a page you can point me to. I was just wondering, because you’re advocating for a one-tier government in your town, have you done the research to see whether property taxes, or taxes in general, would go up in the town of Oakville? Because one of the concerns that we’ve heard from our municipalities in the region of Peel is that our residents would be experiencing tax increases. Is that an analysis that was done in this report?

**Mr. Rob Burton:** No. That is something that needs very expensive work to suss out. I think that we ought to do it. I proceed on the basis of this assumption: I know that Oakville taxpayers pay \$35 million more than their per capita fair share of the regional tax levy. That leaves a fair amount of room for us to improve our situation if we went down the road of single-tier.

But today, I was careful to say at the start that I was offering comments in the new context in which we’re operating, where apparently dissolution is not on the table. So I was merely refining my previous positions to reinvoke Darcy McKeough’s injunction or advice that we continue to seek improvement, and I had some suggestions. This report gives some indications of where we could

seek and find those improvements. I would expect that we'd have to do it co-operatively and happily together in the new context in which we're working.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you, Mayor. I remember when you came last time, you gave us a report about Premier Robarts and the history of the creation of the regions, but I have one more question. Your town is at about 71% on its path to meet the housing targets, and I believe the December numbers are not in yet, so perhaps you might even reach 100%. Unfortunately, my city of Mississauga, which is about four times the size of your town, is only at 27%, where they only had 2,380 actual starts in 2023. You're at about 1,728 housing starts in 2023. Would you have any advice for my city of Mississauga on how to, sort of, get their act together to start building homes faster?

**Mr. Rob Burton:** I have tried to be the kind of mayor who doesn't step on other mayors' turf. Wild horses couldn't drag advice out of me on that front.

But I will tell you that we inspect every foundation when it's poured in Oakville, and we report that and we have those records. And so, based on our records, I know that we've hit 100%. The difficulty with the 71% number is: Because CMHC—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Mr. Rob Burton:** —is the only source for everybody and they don't actually count every foundation—they do some guessing—we're not getting as good a grade as we should be. To fix that, we're going to now start sending our inspection reports to them and hope that they'll improve their records.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you for clarifying that. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you. We're out of time. I want to thank all the presenters here today and the questions from each MPP.

MS. MARIANNE MEED WARD

MR. PAUL SHARMAN

MR. RORY NISAN

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Now we're going to move on to the next group of presenters. If I could ask you to come to the front, please?

The next presenters are the city of Burlington with the mayor, the city of Burlington with a councillor and Rory Nisan. Again, before you start presenting, I ask that you state your name for the record.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** My name is Paul Sharman.

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Excuse me. We're going to start with the city of Burlington, with Mayor Marianne Meed Ward, please.

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** Good morning. I'm Marianne Meed Ward, mayor of the city of Burlington.

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the city of Burlington and thank you for hearing our remarks this

morning. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues, the previous speakers: Halton regional chair Gary Carr; Mayor Rob Burton; and one of our own residents, Marsha Paley, who has coined a new word this morning, which is awesome. I'd also like to acknowledge several regional councillors, also my colleagues, who are here today: Nav Nanda, Cathy Duddeck, Sean O'Meara, Janet Haslett-Theall, Allan Elgar, Clark Somerville and our own colleague on Burlington council, Angelo Bentivegna.

First, we really do applaud the government's efforts to find every lever to get more shovels in the ground, including a review of regional services. We shouldn't be scared by that. Let's dig in and do it. We in Burlington remain a committed partner in the goal of delivering 29,000 units. That's our pledge that we unanimously supported.

We currently have 41,000 housing units in our development pipeline. And to the question earlier around: "Why is Burlington at 12%? What's the issue?" Well, 7,500 of those units are tied up at your Ontario Land Tribunal. For 2,770, we're waiting for site plans, so let's talk to the development industry about why they're not coming in; 3,940 units have been approved, but they haven't come in to get a building permit—we don't control that. There are 7,972 currently under review, which is great—that's what we control—and 18,000 are in pre-application.

So the notion that municipalities are the only thing standing between a young couple and an "affordable" house is simply nonsense. There are many other factors— inflation, cost of goods, labour, other levels of government—and we need to look holistically and thoughtfully about where the issues are so that we can solve them. That's what we're here to do.

You will hear many perspectives on regional review through the course of your road show, including here today, but here's where we are aligned in Halton. There are four areas where we agree:

Firstly, we remain opposed to a mega-city of Halton. I feel your pain in Hamilton. I still hear from Waterdown residents who would love to join the city of Burlington; we'd happily have them. But I know that was painful. You've backed off of that. You heard us. Regional council unanimously opposed that; so did thousands of our residents. We're pretty sure that's not on the table, and that's a good thing.

Secondly, we're open to finding service enhancements, better value for our residents. We've started that process ourselves, and I'll tell you a little bit about that.

Thirdly, we all support the transition of planning services to the local level. The strongest message I can deliver is, "Get on with it." We need you to do that quickly, and many others have asked for that as well.

Fourthly, the services that are provided at the regional level are still going to need to be provided. Whatever model is chosen, those services are critical to the community.

So what have we done? This is by resolution, so this is the Burlington council position—it's in your package. We have unanimously endorsed a resolution that:

—we are open to consideration of all feasible governance options except amalgamation to a mega-city of Halton;

—governance changes should be supported by local-tier councils, based on community engagement, and should deliver better services quicker and faster; and

—needed community infrastructure is funded through development charges or senior levels of government—and I'll come back to that.

Local government is the closest to the people. We understand the needs of our community. We do not need an imposed solution from any other level of government. Our community really doesn't care who's delivering the services as long as they're delivered well.

So, we have started that review process. A couple of days ago, Burlington council directed our city manager to report back at the end of Q1 2024 with a process, timing and tax room implications for existing non-essential services to recommend to us what might be devolved to the lower level. That includes—you've heard some of them before—roads, transportation, traffic control, stormwater management, culture, recreation, drainage, flood control and economic development. I believe we're ready to assume these services, but we'll wait for the information from our staff.

1110

The Municipal Act does allow for migration of services up or down already through a triple majority, so we can look after the review of efficiency ourselves. That's a high bar, so maybe it would be worth looking at whether a simple majority is sufficient, but maybe it should be a high bar. So let's have a look at that.

In addition to the services listed, water and waste water infrastructure, which is currently delivered exclusively at the regional level, needs to be addressed, but particularly the funding of that. You can't sell a house without taps and toilets, and we have several major parcels in Burlington that could easily deliver thousands of housing units but don't have the servicing and the infrastructure, and it would cost tens of thousands of dollars on the cost of that house to deliver that. Regardless of whether this service is delivered by a utility board, continues to be delivered by regional council, whether it's devolved to the local, we simply don't have the funding to pay for it ourselves. It can't be delivered exclusively on the backs of development charges, which add to the cost of housing, and it can't be delivered on the backs of our taxpayers.

That's mostly where we need your help: Modify the criteria of the Building Faster Fund eligibility. It counts foundations, which are completely outside of the municipality's control.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** Thank you. Regional governments are not even eligible for this funding, and they deliver that service right now. Work with upper levels of government to provide adequate funding for municipalities so we can build the infrastructure that's required. Consider a review of the provisions where regions can

self-govern and self-approve ourselves, and set out a clear process with timelines. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you for your presentation.

The next presenter we have is the city of Burlington as well: a city councillor. You have seven minutes for your presentation. You may begin.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** Me?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Yes.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** Okay. Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to be here. My name is Paul Sharman. I'm a ward 5 councillor for the city of Burlington in the region of Halton. I am also the deputy mayor of strategy, budget, process and performance, and president of Halton Community Housing Corp.

I'll just take, very quickly, a few seconds to describe why I'm here and the perspective that I will offer you. I have been an elected official for 13 years now. I've won four elections. But I'm an accountant; I'm a management accountant. I've operated as a controller at Nortel and other companies but, more importantly, I ran a consulting firm—and still do—for 30 years. What I do is reorganize corporations, including some very large corporations. The Canadian government has been a client of mine. I've reorganized companies like US West, Kellogg and many corporations like that. My perspective in what I'm about to say is that of a consultant, somebody who reorganizes corporations. I've spent many years focusing on down-sizing, many years on process redesign, and many years on economic analysis and activity analysis and performance measurement. I take none of this discussion lightly.

I'll start off by saying that I have some general organization performance observations of all levels of government, but whatever I'm saying here especially relates to the building of new homes and the required future amenities and infrastructure, because it's not just about housing. We cannot just have rows and rows of houses like chicken coops. It's not the right answer. We have to make sure we think holistically about the needs of the community.

Burlington is one of the few communities in Canada, or, in fact, North America, as a result of the work we've done, that has a 25-year strategic planning horizon for the community. It's not about getting elected officials re-elected. We need to change our thought processes to think about the future of our communities.

That said, what I can tell you is the following quite quick statements: The first thing is all levels of government function in a highly siloed fashion—barriers around everything. There is much fragmentation of work within those silos. People drop work; they get redirected. In our own planning department, we do these things called refiles, because anything we can find to trip up the applicant, to send it back and keep them waiting for another year, we do. We've got so much work, we've got so many bylaws, and we have such complexity at every level of government, it stops us from being effective.

We have commenting agencies who are disconnected when dealing with our applications—45 of them. There is

significant duplication of work between Halton and Burlington, for example. Why is that? Why don't we actually plan our processes holistically from the province right the way through down to delivery of housing, instead of just having these disconnects which exist dramatically everywhere?

We have poorly designed processes—I don't even think we have designed processes in government; they've evolved, just like they do everywhere. But unless you design them, they're not going to work effectively.

We have inadequate focus on the future. We're thinking about just the last five years or the next five years, but now we're talking about millions of people coming in the next 30 years. When do we get our brains around redesigning government and all the infrastructure we need to make that happen? We're not there. We haven't done that.

We have lack of clarity around purpose. We don't have clarity around performance expectations at every level. They're not aligned. We don't have a 30-year, 25-year strategy for Ontario. When are we going to do that? Because how do you expect anybody to deliver if we're fuzzy and coming up with hare-brained schemes that we then reverse? It's because we haven't been sophisticated, we haven't thought it through.

Inadequate understanding of roles and responsibilities relative to community at all levels, from strategy through process through services through activities and through KPIs—it's not put together. How do we do it? How do we get anything done? How can we possibly expect to get speed in delivery of needed homes and services and infrastructure if we can't even get our brains around how to make it go seamlessly from one level to the other and make it work? We don't do that.

Finally, consequently, all the activities I see are hugely inefficient, hugely ineffective and very wasteful of taxpayers' money. We can do better, and this is the room where I think you can influence it.

So, what works in the region? I can tell you. The first thing I'll say is the employers at all levels of professions are impressive in many ways. I truly appreciate their professionalism, their patience and desire to be supportive of elected officials and regulations. Operations in the region of exclusively controlled spheres which are mostly controlled by the province seem pretty good. But, actually, I don't like being told what to do, because we have to have carriage of the buildings that we're going to do in Burlington, so we need to say to other regions what we're going to deliver, what we want them to deliver to us, not the other way round. I'm being consistent with the mayor's thought process.

What doesn't work well is—well, I'm going to start off with a statement, and you can believe this or not. You can take it as you like. My belief is as region decisions are made, the only democratically elected representatives of any lower-tier municipality are the councillors of that lower-tier municipality and the region chair. Other members do not represent the interests of any other lower-tier municipality other than their own. That causes difficulties around that region table that we don't need, which is why

I'm supportive of the notion—absolutely no amalgamation.

But, furthermore, I want to give carriage to the lower-tier for everything, because it gets in the way when we find regional people saying, “Well, we're in charge. That's the way it will be done.” For example, we've got this open sewer running through the middle of Burlington called the QEW—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** —but we can't get control of the access and egress of that road during peak hours when that sewer blocks up and it spews all into our city roads. We talked to the province, and what's the answer? “Oh, well, you should just, you know, have no parking requirements with high-rise towers.”

I am a long way from finished with this conversation. I have more to say. It's all in the materials I've left with you, and I'll be more than happy to have a conversation with any and all of you at your wish. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you for your presentation.

Now, we'll move onto the next presenter. You have seven minutes. I recognize Rory Nisan.

**Mr. Rory Nisan:** Rory Nisan, deputy mayor and city and regional councillor in ward 3 in Burlington.

Where is my son going to live? How is my son going to afford a place? How far away will he have to move? Will we have to move to be close to him and his family someday? He's only three years old, but eventually he will need his own place, and he deserves his own future.

We're all here today because we've all made building more homes faster our top priority. I'm grateful to every one of you for coming out on a snowy January day, so thank you.

I come with good news and bad news, and I like to start with good news usually. Despite the shortage of homes and despite the high cost of living, the residents of ward 3 in Burlington, and indeed all of Burlington—all of Halton—are living some really great lives.

**1120**

More good news: Halton has a mature two-tier system of local government. We're not afraid to do the hard work, to look inward, prove the processes and find efficiencies. We've done it before, and we can do it again. In fact, it's already happening. Our CAOs are working together now to see what can be downloaded or uploaded. Let's be clear, though, that there is not yet any evidentiary basis for substantive duplication no matter what rhetoric you might hear, nor is there any evidentiary basis, at this point, for downloading rather than uploading. Keep in mind that three out of four municipalities in Halton are still towns. There has not been a single motion at a lower-tier municipality calling for single-tier.

Honestly, Halton region just works. I go there. I put my region hat on. I do what's best for the region. I don't bring local politics there. Some decisions are just better made at a broader level, and the results speak for themselves. Make no mistake, the region is independent and just as much a

part of local democracy as the lower-tier municipalities, even if it's not subject to strong-mayor powers that may frankly incentivize consolidation of power at a lower level.

Now, you might have on your notepads there two columns—upload, download—and I appreciate that, but respectfully, let us do the hard work. We will work collaboratively to develop an evidentiary basis for our decisions that is rooted in the local reality in Halton to get more homes built faster. Those decisions are not going to be made on a whim. They will have the legitimacy of support of the triple majority. Honestly, 99% of what we do at Halton is already by consensus. We'll fix what's broken. If it ain't broke, we're going to leave it alone. I promise if we need anything from you, from the Ontario Legislature, we will call you.

Okay, bad news time: We're not going to build more homes faster if municipalities are chronically underfunded for major infrastructure. There is going to have to be a give-and-take. In Burlington, we're spending \$2.2 million this year alone to improve and streamline our planning and permitting process. We're even experimenting with artificial intelligence for detailed technical reviews.

If you really want more houses built, and I know that you do, you're going to have to finance us. Why? Why can't we just do it ourselves? I'm going to be really brutal here. We can't drop massive tax increases that would be necessary onto our residents. We'll get tossed out of office. We'll be replaced by populist "zero tax increase" campaigners. We will get nowhere. We'll just keep fighting and the houses are not going to get built.

So, what's the alternative? The province and the federal government step in, collaborate with municipalities: pay for what is supposed to be paid, first of all; and second, fund those major growth-related infrastructure and other costs that meet your objectives. This is what we are asking for in the new deal for Halton region.

I'm also Ontario caucus chair for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, so we're pushing the feds for a new municipal growth framework, but that's not going to happen without Ontario. If you're serious about building homes faster, you have to fund infrastructure.

What's the alternative? Do we want our kids, our grandkids, our nieces and nephews going to school in portables for their entire school career? Do you want community centres, overrun pools, overfilled parks, overcrowded? Or how about just water and waste water? Without that, nothing is getting built. This is what's going to happen if the province doesn't start funding us properly—and this goes back to previous governments as well.

Here, at Halton region, we have some shortfalls: \$14.7 million in 2024 for health and social services is owed in funding from the province; \$15.5 million per year due to the Development Charges Act, limiting the collection of development charges to fund critical infrastructure; an estimated total shortfall of \$940 million by 2031 for additional residential development charges as a result of Bill 23; and we have a need to accelerate \$750 million of key water and waste water capacity infrastructure projects. The \$200-million fund is very welcome, but it won't even

cover a third of Halton's needs. This is why regional council unanimously adopted a motion calling for a new deal for Halton region to address the funding shortfall for cost-shared health and social services programming, a shortfall in development charges revenues, and to ensure critical water and waste water infrastructure is adequately funded to keep pace with the growth that you're telling us we have to do and that we are happy to do.

If you want to know Halton region's position, which was approved just this past December by all members—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Mr. Rory Nisan:**—of regional council unanimously—I will share this with you momentarily—here are the copies of the call for the new deal. Maybe you've heard that municipalities are responsible for 60% of public infrastructure in Canada, and we get 12% of the tax dollars. You can fix this. We can build more homes faster. Let's all pick up our hammers and get it done. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you to all the presenters. Now we'll move to the round of questions, starting with the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Sandy Shaw.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you very much. I'm going to start with—this is a hard one. I'm afraid you're going to yell at me. I'm going to start with Mayor Meed, if that's okay. I wanted to talk about—you identified some of the obstacles that your region is facing. I'm talking about the OLT and the site plans.

Really quickly, I will share my experience in Hamilton. You don't need to comment on this, but I just want to get it on the record that this government's greenbelt grab, or the greenbelt scandal, has set us so far back in building the houses that we need. It was unnecessary, it was foolhardy, and we are trying to recover from that, not just in Hamilton but in municipalities across Ontario. In addition, the city of Hamilton, as did other municipalities, spent so much time—planner time, citizen time, council time—to come up with our growth plan, and the province just didn't like it, so they came in and bigfooted our plan and forced an urban boundary expansion on Hamilton, which the government has rolled back.

So, they've rolled back their greenbelt grab and they've rolled back this forced urban expansion, which was a process that was identified by the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner as a flawed process—a corrupted process, it was described in some regard—and that it gave preferential insider treatment to certain developers. That is no way to do planning. I don't think there's anybody that would disagree with me on that.

I would just like to add that Hamilton is meeting our growth targets currently. We're exceeding them, in fact, within the existing settlement boundaries, urban boundaries, so we didn't need to go through this wasteful exercise that the province put us through.

Back to Burlington: I know that Burlington's progress in reaching its targets has—I can only describe it as being maligned by the Premier, publicly, right? Not only was it disrespectful, but it was misinformed, and I would like to

give you the opportunity to further expand on these obstacles—in fact, it's not your responsibility—that the province has imposed, including the fact that developers have been given site plans that are approved.

We have put forward, as the official opposition, a use-it-or-lose-it policy, because if we're really serious about building those homes, the government not only needs to stop providing their own obstacles, but they have to help municipalities and regions clear those obstacles so that they can get the work done.

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** Thank you very much. Burlington has a long-standing position that we will not expand our urban boundary. We weren't part of the changes that were made, expanding into the greenbelt, and we will continue to vigorously defend that. That is a unanimous position of our council.

When the Premier noted that the number of foundations poured—which, as you've heard earlier, is not even accurate. CMHC numbers are different than municipalities' numbers. He invited me to come and have a chat with him, and I did. We talked about the real delays, and this is the critically important point. The narrative has been that municipalities are the only thing standing between a young couple or a middle-income family and an affordable home, and it is nonsense. And until we agree that that is not the singular issue, we will not solve this issue.

1130

Ontario's Big City Mayors, of which, as you know, I'm the chair, commissioned Mike Moffatt to do an independent review of who does what, and it very clearly spelled out, as you heard here today, that there's a role for the federal government and federal and provincial funding is critically important. We won't get this done on the backs of taxpayers at the property tax level. There's a role for municipalities. There's a role for the province. There's a role for the development industry sector. There's a role for non-profits. There's a role for universities. Decisions that are being made at other levels of government are landing literally on our doorsteps, including the refugee crisis, including encampments, and municipalities simply do not have the tools to solve this all by ourself. So funding is critical—a new municipal framework.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has also recently submitted—very complementary and similar to what FCM has done. We at the city of Burlington and, as you heard, at the region have unanimously endorsed that.

We also need to look to our friends in the development industry. Why aren't you pulling permits? There are 3,940 permits in Burlington ready to go.

Let's ask the province to streamline and update the OLT. There are 7,500 permits sitting at your tribunal that we could turn into housing.

So we don't have a problem, at the city of Burlington, meeting our targets; we have a problem with all those other players that are not doing their part. We truly need to work together. That kind of finger-pointing, honestly, is not going to get us where we need to go. We need to have a clear-eyed, honest, thoughtful, accurate picture of where the holdups are. And if we just put this on the back of the

municipal permitting system, we will not deliver on 1.5 million homes, and none of us wants that.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I want to give you an opportunity to talk further about some of the asks that you have of the province, particularly around servicing of new development. We've experienced this in Hamilton, as well—the loss of revenue from Bill 23. We're looking at increased residential tax. Literally, it has been called the Ford tax in Hamilton, because this is where the lost revenue is being impacted—it's on the municipal residential taxpayers.

I did not know this and I would like to hear more about the fact that the eligibility for the Building Faster Fund—to me, it's just insanity that you are being asked, as a region, to do this. The disconnect, as Councillor Sharman said, is stupefying. I cannot believe that you're not eligible for this. So the government is here before you. It is part of the new deal ask. It is giving you the tools that you need to meet this—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** You have 30 seconds remaining.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Oh, pardon me. Quickly, 30 seconds; sorry.

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** Certainly. We will not get where we need to go without funding from the province and from the federal government—it's really as simple as that—and not just for water and waste water infrastructure. The Building Faster Fund has to change. The criteria of foundations, which we don't control, has to change. Regional governments have to be eligible. That has to change.

Development charges pay for transit, community centres, parks; you heard that. We're not just building housing units; we've got to build complete communities. You heard from Councillor Sharman and Councillor Nisan—\$14.7 million at the regional level. We subsidize the province. That's got—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you for your presentations.

We'll move on to the independent member. MPP McMahan, please.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahan:** Thank you for coming, and thank you for hosting us in your beautiful area.

I have to say that your panel has got to be the most energetic and frank. I appreciate your candour. Honestly, you just tell it like it is.

My questions, to start, will be for Marianne, who we've seen many times at committee. Honestly, I can tell your tireless efforts and your passion and your love for not only your community, but Ontario and Ontarians as a whole—so that's much appreciated.

I learned a long time ago that there are three sides to every story, right? So, here we are. We have these housing start numbers, and I'm listing out—I think it was Burlington is at 12% on meeting their targets. To the average Joe—people don't want to read. They're busy. They see the number and they just make assumptions. I was frantically writing down your numbers. If you can just go through, just to dispel that myth or at least tell the other side, and then we can form our opinion of the accuracy.

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** I would love to. This is on my web page, [mariannemeedward.ca](http://mariannemeedward.ca). You can check it out if you search “pipeline to permit.” We are tracking our numbers. Councillor Sharman earlier talked about the importance of KPIs. If you don’t know what’s happening, you can’t solve it, and so we get the numbers.

Here are the numbers: We have over 40,000 units in our development pipeline. Our target is only 29,000, but we’re not going to stop at that; we’ll keep building as long as people need a home. There are 7,500 at the tribunal; 2,770 are waiting for the development industry to come in and apply for a site plan; 7,972 are under review—that is the municipal permit process—and 3,940 have already been approved. We’re just waiting for developers to come in and get a permit. Why aren’t they? That would be a really good question for you to ask them. Another 18,541 are in the pre-application stage. That’s the hope-and-a-dream stage, where somebody owns a piece of property and they come in and they say, “I might want to do something with it. What can I do?” Maybe of those—not all, but many of those do turn into a permit, but that’s where it starts.

We have eyes on every single stage and we are absolutely committed, as you heard from Councillor Nisan, investing \$2.2 million to streamline our permitting process. We’ve just launched what I think is a very innovative standing committee called the Pipeline to Permit Committee, with representatives from the development industry and residents as well as members of council to have eyes on this, to track it and to make sure that we are doing everything within the municipality’s control. But we don’t build houses. We don’t pour foundations, and to judge us on the basis of foundations poured is simply not appropriate, and it won’t get houses built.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thank you very much for clarifying that. I love this standing committee. It should be rolled out across the province. And we heard that yesterday, that municipalities don’t swing the hammers, so you can only do so much.

Also, I like your taps to toilets. I do have R.C. Harris water filtration at one end of my riding and the perfume factory, the sewage treatment plant, at the other, so we often do tap-to-toilet walks.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** It’s true; you need the infrastructure.

In the last couple of seconds: What do you mean by “get on with it”?

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** Give us the funding that we need. Work with FCM, with AMO, with the federal government, with the provincial government, and start building the infrastructure, because the houses, even if they are built, can’t be sold without taps and toilets.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thanks, everyone.

Next, we’re going to move on to the government side. I recognize MPP Rae.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you to all the presenters for your presentations today. My first comment, I guess, as was alluded to in all of your remarks, was the announcement in the fall economic statement around waste water infrastructure, the \$200 million. I 100% agree; we could probably spend \$200 million in my own riding, and I do not have the population that Burlington and Oakville and Halton Hills has in it.

But I’d also encourage Your Worship and the two regional councillors and the councillor to talk to the very powerful Liberal members in Halton region. Minister Surma, our Minister of Infrastructure provincially, continually asks her federal counterpart to fund waste water infrastructure because we know, as the provincial government—100% we hear what you’re saying, where it will get more homes built across, in Burlington, in downtown Stratford, you name it. But they have not come to the table, so we’ve decided to go it alone. I know more details will come out on how the funding will be allocated and the application process and all of that for your staff to review in the coming months. We would love to see more money in that pot, and it would be more if the—obviously, thinking of the historical infrastructure agreements we’ve had in the past with the federal government, no matter what federal government that is, where it’s usually a third, a third, a third—we heard that yesterday in Niagara as well.

I would strongly encourage you to talk to your very powerful, I would argue—it’s two members in particular I’m thinking about who are at the cabinet table federally, to continue to ensure that they advocate for that. Because we’re there, ready to go it alone with yourselves right now, with infrastructure, waste water infrastructure in particular. I know Minister Calandra mentions this often in media interviews, in the House and in meetings with the big city mayors as well, around the federal funding for as-of-rights: You could take a small percentage of that and fill all the housing needs in York, which the minister is from. I’m sure we could probably be close to meeting all the infrastructure needs in Halton with that infrastructure funding. We share with our federal colleagues often, but it always helps to have more voices on that aspect.

1140

This is for Marianne Meed Ward: I was just wondering if you could provide two examples. We heard about the Ontario Land Tribunal board yesterday in Niagara. I know the Ministry of the Attorney General has made some investments in that. I know there’s more. Bill 23 also made some changes around who could appeal a site plan amendment development, because I know even in my own riding there have been developments held up because of unnecessary appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

I was wondering if you could provide two examples for the city of—so we heard from Mayor Burton earlier about roads. We heard that in Niagara yesterday, the down-loading of roads. Are there two other services? Mayor Burton mentioned economic development. Are there two shared right now, or one service at the regional that you

believe would help get more homes built or provide better services for the citizens in the city of Burlington?

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** We have actually tasked our staff to come up with that list, but of what could be devolved according to non-exclusive services—so there's no legislation preventing us from taking it or uploading it, whatever we wish—roads is huge, and that's a key part of development, obviously. You can't have a subdivision without road infrastructure, and even if it's infill, you have to look at roads and traffic control. Stormwater management is another one that could be at either level.

But it's really important not to lose sight of the fact—and Councillor Sharman touched on this earlier, and Councillor Nisan in his comments about his own family situation—that we have to think more than just units. Culture, heritage, parks, transit: All of those services enable complete communities. It's why people want to live in the number one city in Ontario—that's Burlington, by the way; number five in the country, thank you.

Drainage and flood control; yes, economic development, because we're doing mixed use: We are leading the way on growth and development at our major transit station areas. We've got three, and that's where the bulk of our 29,000 units will go. But we want jobs there, we want services there, so we need to be able to have control over that as we're making approval of the housing component that I would say goes with those jobs.

We really want to have a look at all of those, but the ones that are related specifically to infrastructure, that are part of the planning applications, are roads, stormwater management and, obviously, drainage.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Chair, I defer my time to my colleague.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Okay. You can share your time with MPP Gallagher Murphy.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you, Chair, and through you: Thank you very much for the presentation today. I'm very familiar with Burlington; my parents used to live here, and they retired here.

My first comment is with regard to Councillor Nisan, if I pronounced that correctly—

**Mr. Rory Nisan:** Yes.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Wonderful—with regard to health services as it pertains to the region from a public health care perspective. In fact, Halton region has received an increase of 29.4% in investments from the province as compared to 2018, and that does not include the COVID-19 investment. I also wanted to clarify, as well, the other regional services, paramedic services: Since 2020-21, there has been an increase of 5% to the paramedic services for Halton region, and that also includes the Dedicated Offload Nurses Program, which is great.

Now, my specific question is actually to Councillor Sharman. Thank you very much for your presentation. I noted in your comments you talked about the complexity of all levels of government. You talked specifically about duplication of work. As it pertains to building more homes, could you give me a specific example of where duplication

of work comes in that is perhaps preventing Burlington from making sure more homes can get built? I'd appreciate that.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** Sure. Thank you very much for the question. As you will know, there are different groups or organizations involved with approving the applications: the region, Conservation Halton and the city of Burlington. What happens is, they all take their time, and they all have their own rules and their own bylaws and all the rest of it. We can just do it all at the city. The duplication is that we're going through the same administration process of getting an application, trying to review it, looking at our rules—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** You have 30 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:**—and suggesting it could be done as a single stream within the city of Burlington.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** From a regional perspective, does that mean the region should not be involved in that—that you can do it yourself?

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** In my general view, the answer is that we should do as much as can be done at the lower level as possible.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Next, we'll move on to the official opposition. MPP Shaw, you have seven and a half minutes.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I'm going to pose one question, and I'm going to let Councillor Nisan and Councillor Sharman answer it. You will each probably have three minutes, so this will reduce the time that I eat up for you to answer.

I'm really interested in the conversation around complete communities. What we have been hearing is a lot about the physical infrastructure, which is absolutely important. But we've been touching on the idea of the social infrastructure—the parks, the recreation centres, the schools—the things that build a community and the things that you and your family would certainly enjoy, as any family would. So if you could talk about what I perceive is, in this fractured system, the lack of understanding or the lack of coordination—that you're building communities, that you're not just pouring foundation, that you're not just putting up homes that are vacant. And speak to some of the things that you talked about. For example, you said 60% of the costs are borne by municipalities—I think those may be social service costs—but you receive 12% of the taxes. I may have got that stat wrong. You could maybe even talk about your work with FCM and the idea of the new deal. Maybe, if anyone has any information or would like to share what the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the big city mayors are talking about. FCM came to a pre-budget consultation that we had, and they did not hold back. They talked about billions and billions of dollars that they're going to be short, that are being downloaded by this government, trying to build these homes.

That's my question. I said you might have three minutes. You might have two minutes and 30 seconds each, so there you go.

**Mr. Rory Nisan:** Everything you said, MPP Shaw, is accurate. FCM is making a really strong push to the federal government, but we need the same sort of push which is also launching provincially to fund these soft costs. So if we build a house, that's great; if we can connect it to the taps, that's absolutely necessary.

Canada is the best place to live in the world for a reason. It's because we have the community centres. It's because we have the firefighters, the police officers. It's because we have green space that we can go and play in. So I think that we can aspire to more than just connecting homes to the waste water if we want and expect our children to have the same quality of life that we've had.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** The thing that may not be recognized here and that contributes to why we have very low starts in housing is because we're built out; we have no greenfield.

The fact that the planning regime uses things called BPE, which is rear-view mirror looking, and it was never considered that we would actually be requiring to grow—it was only on November 8 that we found out we were going to have, actually, 70,000 more people. And then when the province—and we were very pleased—converted those lands to mixed use, 700 acres, it gave us the opportunity to have some growth and have a future. But the fact is, there is no analysis that deals with anything other than planning code and official plans. There is no consideration of the social benefits of development. There is no triple bottom line, and there is no win-win-win. So the fact of the matter is, we are not thinking holistically. We are not thinking about our future.

We need to be out there—30 years—looking at the mix of people coming here, because there's going to be huge numbers of people from the subcontinent and from Asia, and they will not be used to the things that we wouldn't have because we don't have the land. We actually have to think about it now, because otherwise we'll keep doing what we're doing right now, in chunks of five years, and it will just be more of the same old, row after row after row. So we have to take action now.

1150

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** It looks like I have time left?

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Three minutes. You answered a lot quicker than I asked. I've got to take lessons—oh, carry on, yes.

**Mr. Rory Nisan:** Thank you—not for long. I do want to say to the question of us getting money from the federal government and asking them for that waste water money, absolutely, we would be more than happy to get direct funding from the federal government down to municipalities, like they have in other areas like the Housing Accelerator Fund.

Burlington approved four units, as of right, which is unlocking the key to the Housing Accelerator Fund. Unfortunately, it's not unlocking anything with the province. Those policy changes are not unlocking funding with the province, and honestly, we feel that they should. We are grateful for the increases from the provincial government,

don't get me wrong, but you still owe us. We're still in the hole. So we would really appreciate it if you get to even and then create that new funding framework.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I'll ask my question quickly, maybe back to Mayor Meed. I've been sitting in the pre-budget consultations, and honestly, it's merging, because the things that you're talking about, about this regional government, are what I'm hearing from the organizations and the municipalities that are struggling with a crisis in health care services, the code zeros, the schools, the homelessness crisis. In the time that I've left you, would you like to just talk about some of those things, as well, that you are struggling with or that you are trying to deal with in your municipality?

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** Well, we are responsible at the local and regional level for approving housing units, but there's no requirement that the schools be there when the population shows up. My colleagues behind me from Oakville, especially in north Oakville—there are dozens and dozens of kids in portables and have been that way their entire school journey.

We know we have a health care crisis. We know we have an off-loading ambulance crisis. So all of the other services that make livability in a community are not there. We have a singular focus on foundations, which is really a deprived look at what we are trying to build. We're trying to build homes and communities for 1.5-million-plus people, and as you've heard here today, we can't do this on the backs of property taxpayers.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** If you have one second or two—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** You have 45 seconds left.

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** Thank you very much.

In Burlington, we are the first place in Canada to implement a program of all-inclusive care for the elderly which is designed to keep people out of the hospital system. The health care system could not cope with COVID. What we have to do is redesign the health care system, and we're doing it. We're now scaling up to five PACE centres in Canada, and I'm, in the moment, scaling this up to a one-million-person capacity across Ontario in the next 10 years. The design of it is to keep people out of the sick system. There's the way we improve our health care.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Yes, thank you. And really quickly, I'll say that the focus on foundations is like the government's focus on beds in hospitals. A bed is not health care. You need all the things surrounding it, the nurses and the PSWs. So thank you for your presentation and that kind of holistic thinking, which is missing, I think, in our—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you. That concludes the time for that question. Thank you so much, everyone, for all your answers.

I'm going to move next to the independent member for four and a half minutes. MPP McMahan.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahan:** All right. Now we have to practise toastmaster style, since I only get the half the time—lucky me, lucky you.

We're going to start with Paul, the most frank person I've met yet—love it. You were talking about us not being forward-thinking and planning for the future, and I agree. I'm a big environmentalist; that's why I got back in this nutty world, let's say, and I'm very worried about the lack of climate action. We've been told by our Financial Accountability Officer about the high cost of inaction for building resilient infrastructure. If you could think of one thing for sure that is forward-thinking and acting now or yesterday, what would that be?

**Mr. Paul Sharman:** Thanks for the question. I'm a data freak, and I'd start off with the numbers. I hear a lot of ideological arguments about save the grass blade, save the world. I think that is uninformed. I also believe we need environment care.

I just think we're not having balanced conversations about what the real situation is and what has to be accomplished. The aging community leaves us in a place where we can't have babies enough to fill jobs. We can't find housing because everybody is getting older and not dying. So we actually have to look out 30 years and ask ourselves who needs to be here, how we're going to get them, how we're going to look after the environment and what social benefits of development we're going to provide, including all the infrastructure. And do some planning at the province level, please.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Now I'm going to whip over to Rory—my favourite name, an Irish name.

Thank you. I just got this handed to me, hot off the press. Amazing. This was unanimously passed in beautiful Burlington. The resolution is for a new deal for Halton region. Give me more details, exactly, specifically. What would you want? Dream list.

**Mr. Rory Nisan:** This was unanimously approved at Halton regional council, so it comes with the authority of the 24 members of Halton region, spanning the four local municipalities acting in Halton region's interest.

The new deal for Halton region is us asking that we partner with the provincial government on the incredible growth that we are being asked and we are willing to deliver. So it's asking that the provincial government, the Legislature, be a partner with us, and that you fund what needs to be funded to achieve the objectives that you have laid out for Halton region.

We're magnanimous; we think that everyone in Ontario is deserving of a new deal. But seeing Toronto being able to make trade-offs for highways for funding—we don't have any highways we can trade you, but we can promise you we will build 100% of the homes you are asking for. We'll probably beat it, frankly. But we won't beat it, we won't meet it, we won't even scrape it without provincial support. I really believe that this government understands that. That's why you did the \$200-million fund over three years. But we're just getting started, as MPP Rae said.

And if I may just add: We can't forget, in this new deal or in any deal, those who are most in need. Chair Carr mentioned how the paramedics work and how Halton region has stepped up. One thing that makes Halton region nearly one of a kind is that we have a place for every homeless

person in need. We can approach every person who is unhoused, I should say, and offer them a place to be.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** You have 30 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Rory Nisan:** You won't find that everywhere. We'll even take them to visit their pets at the animal shelter. That's how much we care for these people.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Wow. Yesterday, I thought I was moving to Pelham, but I think I'm moving to Burlington today.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** That concludes that round of questioning.

We'll move to the government side. I recognize MPP Rae for the next round of questions.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Thank you again to our municipal colleagues for their presentations.

I just want to commend the region on their work for those who are unhoused. It's great to hear that you're able to find those systems and work that through.

I know, provincially, we did increase the Homelessness Prevention Program by 44% last year, and that's obviously going forward for the next three years, which also, adding to that, provided stability. I can only speak for my own service managers, but they appreciated knowing what they would get for the next three years to be able to plan out some more long-term solutions, which is key for helping those who are currently unhoused in our communities.

I do know, as well—just since health care has come up already—having 30,000 students in nursing is promising. Obviously, it takes a long time to train a doctor. It takes a long time to train a nurse. But we are making those investments.

My question is to Rory, to start. I'm always going back to examples, because it really helps me when I go back to Minister Calandra. Are there one or two examples—we heard the infrastructure funding—of other processes that can be changed to help get those—Marianne mentioned that there are almost 3,000 in the pipeline. Are there things the region can do to help ensure that site plan approval occurs quickly? Paul mentioned three different groups: conservation authorities, city, region. Is the region looking at ways they could potentially just have one sort of one-stop window?

1200

**Mr. Rory Nisan:** I have to be honest, with Bill 23 devolving planning down to the local municipalities, that has got to be where you need to cast your eyes at this point. Conservation Halton meets its planning time frames well over 90% of the time. Region of Halton is also very quick in responding, but they're not going to be a factor going forward in those planning timelines. If you want to get the homes built, you've got to look at the lower-tiers.

The city of Burlington is now working with the accelerated timelines that we were given to start approving developments. Committee just brought to council a new long-term residence that's seven storeys. I'll tell you it was not unanimously supported by local residents, but we knew it was the right thing for Burlington and that's why we brought it forward.

I appreciate your interest in how we can make Halton region faster. Maybe if we got that royal assent on Bill 23, that would definitely help us a lot, just to have that clarity. You know, it's very tough, MPP Rae, to be working under a cloud of "I'm not sure which direction we're going and which way." That makes it hard for developers too. That's why we have 41,000 in the pipeline and not 41,000 that are being built right now. Thank you for your question.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** Yes, thank you, Rory.

Then, one of my final questions for today would be to Marianne Meed Ward. Initially, you mentioned the Ontario Land Tribunal and you mentioned that 7,000, roughly, went through there. Is it true that the city of Burlington is appealing a lot of those? Did they send them, or with their support, to the tribunal?

**Ms. Marianne Meed Ward:** No, actually. Those are appealed often by the developer for the time it takes to develop applications. As Councillor Sharman said earlier, we're not doing greenfield development in Burlington. It's highly complex infill development: major, 30-storey, five, six, seven towers in one area. The kind of review that is required doesn't happen within the 120 days. Often, the information we need from the applicant, we don't even get within the 120 days. And there is no recognition or change between that and a much smaller two semi-detached units. It's 120 days, that's it, and shortened very recently.

We get appealed for non-decision because developers want to get their name in the queue early. That is why they're going there, because often we get—they told us, "We want to continue working with you to get an answer, but we need to get our spot at the OLT, so we're not going to wait another three or four months for you to get the decision that is probably the right one. We're going to put our name into the OLT." Well, that stops everything, and that just adds another two years to the time frame for getting an approval because of the delays at the tribunal, because of the de novo changes, that you reset back, where everything starts at the very beginning again as if there had been no review.

So all of our work, the months, months and months of work that happens at a local level, it's gone, and it starts all over again with experts and submissions. And one tribunal person, not elected, appointed by the government, makes that decision. It is an inefficient system.

Halton regional council has a unanimous position to abolish the OLT, by the way. We can figure this out on our own. In many cases—we just had several very recently where we came to a settlement with the developer. We're ready to be accommodating and to work together. Almost every one of those applications ends in Burlington with a settlement—very few changes. What I can tell you is hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on lawyers and experts at the tribunal, and two to four years of delay. The system is broken. OLT is broken, and I think you would find that same comment from the development industry, frankly.

**Mr. Matthew Rae:** I appreciate your comments.

Thank you, Chair. I'm done, no more questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Any other speakers on the government side? Okay, thank you very much.

I want to thank the presenters today for your very informed comments.

I'll move on to MPP Shaw for her comment.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Chair, I would like to seek unanimous consent of the committee to agree to hear from our 1 p.m. witness at noon.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Do we have unanimous consent? Okay, thank you.

Thank you, presenters.

MS. ANNE MARSDEN

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** We will now call on our next presenter: Anne Marsden. Welcome. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. You may begin.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** Anne Marsden from Burlington, private citizen.

I circulated my notes of what I intended to say today before I heard the Burlington presentations. I am going to ask you to really scrutinize what I said and the need that I am bringing to you for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to please consider an accountability process that has public accessibility to ensure that, whatever is decided on for Halton, Burlington and the rest of Ontario, we have a process the same as Alberta has where, when we have rogue councils, we can deal with those issues and we can have them attended to—when rogue councils are not following the Municipal Act; they are going their own way. And a perfect example of that was the presentations I just heard. That was the opinions of individuals. They did not receive any input from the Burlington community. We personally asked them to tell us what their intentions were in speaking to this committee, what they were going to bring forward, so they could hear from the public, and they didn't. They refused to do that. This was the first time I heard what they were going to put forward.

My husband and I do what we do because we believe it's a command to work for the best interests of the city to which we are brought. We are pro bono for anything we do. We do not accept donations—we do not do anything. But we want to have a city that follows the municipal rules, especially in accordance with accountability and transparency. We both have excellent credentials in terms of audits, and you will see two examples of the audits that we have done, which have been totally ignored. The audits are missing from the secure, supposedly, committee records, which—the government has insisted that that happens with a retention policy etc., and several other things.

I heard from Halton, their Chair Carr, about the wonderful services, health care services etc. they provide. In 2006 Burlington got the record, at Joseph Brant Hospital, for the number of deaths from an infectious disease, C. diff. People called for an investigation. We did our audit and we realized that they knew about that infectious disease. It was reported to Halton region. Did Halton region do what

they were supposed to do in accordance with the requirements of the health board—a health board that has never met, by the way. Have you ever heard of a region—in Hamilton, hundreds of meetings since they were formed. Halton region does not have one set of minutes for a health board.

The medical officer of health said that we were over in the number of encephalitis cases—we're above the Ontario average. Was one question asked? "Is it still there?" "What are we doing to prevent this?" There were absolutely no questions; it was just passed on. That's the kinds of things that we have to do.

1210

I heard today about how generous we are to those who are homeless. In Burlington, we have a women's shelter; we do not have a men's shelter. And if you ask our councillors, "Where's your policy for the homeless etc.," they will tell you, "Oh, that's the region's job."

Now then, we know and we had a person run in, actually, Hamilton for mayor on the basis of the fact that Halton's plan several years ago, and the social services department will support this—their plan for homeless people was to give them a bus ticket to either Hamilton or Toronto; they had their choice. And I know that's a fact, and if you go back in your election media coverage, you will find that that was why somebody called Fern Rankin ran, because she didn't see why Burlington should not be made to fulfill their responsibilities.

They talk about efficiencies and everything else, and they talk about how it's the government's fault or this person's fault. The very first thing the 2018 new council, with Mayor Marianne Meed Ward in the leadership position, did was introduce an interim control bylaw. Construction stopped. We had a downtown that looked like a cemetery. It was just all construction that had stopped.

We had very much a need for long-term-care beds in Burlington. We had people who were going to provide X number of long-term-care beds. The city said, "No, you're not going to be exempted from the interim control bylaw," or whatever. That was later appealed, and we were the ones, the people, who spoke at that council meeting, saying, "We need these beds. Please give them an exemption. It's not going to interfere with anything else." No, they wouldn't. So it was taken to the OLT, and there was a judgment made that they couldn't understand why Burlington was now supporting that and wouldn't object to those beds when they had—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** Sorry?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** That they now were supporting something which for a year had been allowed to interfere with long-term beds—so I'm very concerned about what I heard from this table today. It's not the public opinion.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank you very much for coming today to committee and presenting that, Ms. Marsden.

I'm now going to pass for questions to the official opposition. MPP Shaw, for seven and a half minutes.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Thank you for your presentation today. The reason that we're here today is to look at this region and to see whether they're structured in a way that they have effective service delivery and that that service delivery will help to achieve the province's goal of 1.5 million homes. I'm taking it from your deputation that you may not think that that's the case, but do you think that the region, as it's currently formulated, is in a position to deliver the homes that are required and that have been mandated by the province?

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** I don't think that they are, in terms of the numbers, and I'm not necessarily believing that all of that is their fault; there's a lot of factors that go into that. However, when Burlington, as I say, introduced an interim control bylaw and put everything at a standstill, that caused a ripple effect in Burlington that—then they had to get going, and we can't see where any affordable housing is being built in Burlington, none whatsoever. We've got no evidence that affordable housing is being built. It's all high-rises, multi-million-dollar homes and things like that. Whereas I come from a country, Britain—I was born after the war—where the federal government, mainly the local companies, the municipals and everything came together and built housing. People could rent housing. I lived in a company house, an ICI Imperial Chemical Industries house, until I got married. It was a good house with a wonderful garden and everything else. We came to depend on our municipalities and our—we only have federal, we don't have provincial government to provide that housing. They used to sell it to you at an affordable price, after they had gotten their money back, if you wanted to buy it, so it was very good. Also, the prefab homes were built.

I don't see any of this being discussed at our council, our region, or any of those places. They just don't seem to zero in on, how can we provide affordable houses? And that's the key word; Marsha was right.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** You referenced Mayor Meed Ward's deputation about the struggles that they're having to build affordable housing. I will say, the government is here listening today because they are committed to building 1.5 million homes. We know that we need that, and we agree with the government's direction in that regard. What I would respectfully say to the government is that what we're hearing are really good suggestions and ideas and ways that we, as a legislative body, can get rid of some of the obstacles that are in the way of municipalities, just like the region, to help that goal. It's a laudable goal. And I agree with you; we need to have all kinds of housing.

Do you have any suggestions for this committee and this government on things that could be done to make this happen faster, to make homes that are affordable, as you've described? You talked about prefab homes. Do you have any other suggestions for this committee on how we could facilitate and make it easier for these homes that are much-needed to be built?

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** I definitely agree with—and I think there has already been a move to this—prefab homes; in Burlington, we built out, so it is infill.

One of the things that they could do is change zoning bylaws. A single-family home could be turned into a fourplex. I know there has been that discussion at council—on the heritage problem of property and all the obstacles that were put in the way of this family who had bought a home and were going to rebuild it to make it a three-family, four-family home. It was canned, and it was very, very difficult for these people. I think these people were almost in tears at their delegation.

We don't see any of that kind of suggestion on—and there are plenty brought forward: prefab homes; changing zoning, because, as I say, we built out. So what are we going to do about these? We can have a huge home that could house four families in a fourplex or something like that if the zoning were changed and the government was to promote that kind of stuff. I drive through downtown Burlington or whatever and I say, "That could house four families." That's the only way we're going to be able to do it, I believe, in Burlington—not the high-rises, because they're not affordable.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** That's good advice. I think that this committee is listening. I really want to thank you for being here and your deputation today. We will take all of that into consideration, and hopefully we can achieve what you're talking about, which I believe is what we think we need to do to build good and complete communities for the future. Thank you very much for your testimony here today.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Next, we're going to move to the independent. MPP McMahon, for four and a half minutes.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thank you so much for coming in, Anne. I think your—I was going to say "better half," but it may be "lesser half," is here with you, but partner in crime, I see, because in your submission I see the picture on the back. You two have been hard at it for years, trying to bring accountability and build better communities. I'm just wondering if you could tell me a little about that and how you got involved in advocacy.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** Both my husband and I were—our professional careers, mine in provincial hospital administration, and my husband's in several paths where he ended up in hydro supervision, the metering department. We were both trained in legislation compliance audits. My husband's was to protect from theft of power in hydro. Mine was, like, every single department in a hospital, which—it's like a little city. In fact, I think we had a bigger budget than the city of Burlington at one time when I worked there, just before I retired.

1220

We've used those skills to audit council decisions, region decisions, and my work has been appreciated at the international level, the national level. So I have the credentials and know what I'm doing. But I will take an audit to, say, Burlington or the region, especially on the C. diff crisis and why the region didn't do what they should have done which would have saved all those lives, and it's

ignored. It's just buried. You can't go and get them etc. They absolutely ignore the need for efficiencies.

As an example, the last council before the Meed Ward council approved an update on our civic square, where the brickwork on the floor was failing. It did not meet the 2016 accessibility standards. They approved it for a budget to be done in 2019. In 2019, it happened to go over budget, but there was plenty of money in the pot from ones that had gone under budget to do the job that needed to be done, and the council says, "Oh, we find it so underwhelming, this design. This is our flagship." Never mind the trip hazards from the failing brickwork and all those things. So they referred it back to staff. This is an approved project. They referred it back to staff. It's now in our 2025-26 budget at an increase of \$2.1 million on the bill.

What I'm trying to say is, they do not think about efficiencies. They do not think about how this is our 150th anniversary and we have a civic square with failed brickwork that has fall hazards which we've brought to the attention of the medical officer of health—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** —and had no response.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thirty seconds, so you can finish.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** Okay. So we've done that, and we've been doing it since 1994.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Wow.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** We know what we're doing, and we know the difference in the municipal governments and how they receive them. The earlier municipal governments used to receive them, used to take the information and make improvements. Since 2014, no.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Well, thank you so much to you and your husband for caring so strongly about your community and doing something about it. Thanks.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Okay, we'll move on now. Thank you very much, Anne and MPP McMahon.

We'll move on to the government side for questions. I recognize MPP Triantafilopoulos.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Anne and Dave, it's great to see you again. You are real leaders in our community and strong voices that I think are important voices to be heard, particularly on issues of accountability and transparency in our community, so I thank you for always being there.

I wanted to talk a little bit about some interesting statistics. Statistics Canada population growth has projected that, in Halton, our population will reach about a million people—one million people—in the next 20 to 25 years. That's an increase of over 60%. So the demand for housing, all kinds of housing, in our community is growing. You've mentioned specifically, post-war, the prefab homes that were built in the UK. In fact, we've seen some of those kinds of prefab homes in various communities across Ontario as well, the sort of small bungalow-type homes.

As you may or may not be aware, part of what our government is looking at is how to, in fact, bring something

that would be—it's called a modular home—faster to build, less expensive, and would meet the needs of families that might be going into a starter home or who may not have the means to get into a very traditional, expensive home.

What are your thoughts around different types of homes and creative ways to be able to solve our housing crisis?

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** I believe that's the path to go. I don't think there's any other path. For example, we talk about affordable; we talk about minimum wage; we talk about the poverty level; we talk about, when we look at the condos—750 square feet, for how much money, whatever the figure is, but like a little box place.

The prefabs, the modular homes which—I don't know that we can support that in Burlington, because we built out, but I'm talking about Ontario. I'm a part of Ontario, I love Ontario, and I want Ontario to have the things that we should have: affordable housing and, yes, modular homes; small homes; increasing, as I said, big family homes to fourplexes; even the tiny homes that—people will be far happier living in a tiny home than underneath the tree that's across the road from where I live. That's what you must concentrate on. I've been pleased to read about how that's where the government is going, and I just think they need to do more of a push. I definitely believe they need to bring the federal government inside in this, because, let's face it, our immigration policy and everything else is directed by the federal government, and they need to give the monies for the municipalities and the provinces to be able to do the best we can do.

Everybody deserves to have a home. I never heard the word “homeless” until I came to Canada in my mid-twenties. I never knew there was such a thing as homelessness, and I lived in a very small country that had a much bigger population than Canada.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** You raised a really good point. As you know, immigration policy is at the federal government level, and yet, provinces have to be able to respond with housing, with health care, with schools, with all of the infrastructure that goes with that planning.

We understand that the federal government has announced that in years to come, the average annual increase in immigration to Canada will be something like 500,000 people. We also know that last year alone, we had over 800,000 people who actually made their home in Ontario. The needs are great, in terms of being able to supply the kind of infrastructure we need for all of our citizens moving forward, so it's important to be creative and innovative. And frankly, we have to move very quickly in order to address those growing needs.

One of the areas in which the government has been moving is specifically to be able to build more rental housing, as well. You'll be interested to know that the

government removed the full 8% provincial portion of the HST on qualifying new purpose-built rental housing, and that will include apartment buildings, student housing and seniors' residences built for long-term-care accommodation. That, I think, as well, will help to incentivize people who will in fact build that type of accommodation moving forward. So we're looking at all hands on deck, being innovative in terms of our approach, in order to be able to meet the growing needs of our community.

As you know, I represent the community of Oakville North—Burlington, and a lot of the growth has been going in north Oakville and north Burlington, and so we see that on a daily basis.

We also see that families' needs are different. Some families live in three-generational homes; others just need a smaller condo, because they might live alone or just with their spouse.

So we need to be innovative, we need to be creative, and all levels of government need to come to the table to work, not in silos, but co-operatively.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** I agree. Co-operation is never a bad thing, is it? And as I say, the problem is the country's. It's not Burlington's. It's not the province's. It is a country-wide problem, and we need some compassion to deal with that.

It breaks my heart every time I see somebody out in the rain, panhandling. I hear, “Oh, they're really probably making more money than you are”—you know, whatever. I don't believe that. Yes, there may be some people who—and there always are. There are always scammers out there. But it just breaks my heart when I see the state of this country at the moment, with the homelessness, the increased use of the food banks. That was the talk at our budget meetings in Burlington. We had people on there say—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thirty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Anne Marsden:** “You can't do this to your community,” when they were planning on it. They'd all had pay raises, by the way, which they didn't refuse, but here we are with people who—increased numbers at the food banks and the numbers of homelessness. We see them on the streets every day, so we can't deny it.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong):** Thank very much, Ms. Marsden. Are there any further questions on the presentation?

Seeing no further questions, I just want to thank all the committee presenters coming today to provide their perspective on this very important study that the government is undertaking on regional government.

With that, I now adjourn the committee until 10 a.m. on Friday, January 12, 2024.

*The committee adjourned at 1231.*



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