



Marit Stiles
MPP / Députée, Davenport

Queen's Park
Room 157, Main Legislative Building /
Pièce 157, Édifice de l'Assemblée législative
Queen's Park • Toronto, ON M7A 1A5
☎ 416-326-7202
✉ mstiles-qp@ndp.on.ca

Community Office
Bureau communautaire
1199 Bloor Street West
Toronto, ON M6H 1N4
☎ 416-535-3158
✉ mstiles-co@ndp.on.ca

Honourable J. David Wake
Office of the Integrity Commissioner
2 Bloor Street West, Suite 2100
Toronto, ON M4W 3E2

December 8, 2022

Dear Mr. Wake,

Last month, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing proposed to remove 7,400 acres of land from Ontario's Greenbelt plan, encouraging housing development on what is, at present, protected land. This proposal was done in conjunction with the proposed repeal of the *Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act*, which would remove 4,500 acres of prime farmland. I am requesting an opinion on whether this government acted improperly with respect to these proposals.

I am alarmed by the ongoing media reports that outline curious timing of recent purchases of Greenbelt land by powerful landowners with donor and political ties to the Ontario PC Party. Many of these developers have been on the receiving end of favourable Ministerial Zoning Orders and have a demonstrable long-standing relationship with the government.

I am additionally concerned with reports of improper lobbying on the part of Luca Bucci, CEO of the Ontario Homebuilders Association. Mr. Bucci was the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing from January 2021 to April 2022. In June of 2022, Mr. Bucci became the CEO of the Ontario Homebuilders Association, an organization with strong ties to developers across the province.

I would request that your office investigate improper lobbying and whether sections 2 and 3 of the *Members' Integrity Act* have been breached by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Section 2 provides that a member of the Assembly shall not make a decision or participate in making a decision in the execution of his or her office if the member knows or reasonably should know that in the making of that decision there is an opportunity to further the member's private interest or improperly to further another person's private interest. Section 3 states, "A member of the Assembly shall not use information that is obtained in his or her capacity as a member and that is not available to the general public to further or seek to further the member's private interest or improperly to further or seek to further another person's private interest."

The Minister has repeatedly refused to deny whether he or any other government or PC Party official shared information with any landowner about the Greenbelt removals or urban boundary expansions prior to November 4, 2022. The attached affidavit and articles outline what in my opinion is a pattern of ongoing arbitrary land use decisions benefiting particulate private interests of a small group of developers with ties to the PC Party.

I would be happy to discuss the matter with you in greater detail and look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marit Stiles', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marit Stiles, MPP
Davenport

In the Matter of a Request pursuant to s. 30(1) of the *Member's Integrity Act*

AFFIDAVIT OF MARIT STILES, MPP

I, MARIT STILES, of the CITY OF TORONTO, Province of Ontario, SOLEMNLY AFFIRM AS FOLLOWS:

1. I am a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Davenport. I confirm that I have knowledge of the matters to which I hereinafter depose.
2. As a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I am making a request to the Integrity Commissioner under Section 30 (1) of the *Member's Integrity Act*.
3. I have reasonable grounds to believe that Minister Steve Clark, the Member for Leeds—Grenville-Thousand Islands contravened section 2 and section 3 of the *Member's Integrity Act* in a decision to allow development on lands in the Greenbelt and Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve.
4. I have reasonable grounds to believe that Luca Bucci, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Ontario Home Builders Association contravened *O. Reg. 382/07 (18)* in his lobbying efforts to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in Housing, as such lobbying efforts were done prior to the completion of the 12 month window after ceasing his employment as Chief of Staff to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
5. I ask that the Commissioner offer an opinion on the matter.

Changes to Greenbelt, Urban Boundaries, and Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve

6. On November 4, 2022, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced a proposal to remove lands from the Greenbelt.
7. On November 16 2022, the Minister tabled Bill 39, the *Better Municipal Governance Act*, which, if passed, would repeal the *Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act*.

Repeated failure to that deny advance knowledge provided

8. In a press conference on Wednesday, November 16, 2022, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark acknowledged he had spoken with developers prior to the Greenbelt removal consultation announcement.¹
9. In an interview with QP Briefing from November 17, 2022, titled "Developers hit pay dirt with Greenbelt land, prompting calls for transparency", when asked if any developers were given advance notice about the decision, Minister Steve Clark stated that he met with builders frequently.²
10. University Rosedale MPP Jessica Bell questioned the Minister three times on November 29, 2022, asking whether "the minister or any other government or PC Party official" shared information with

¹ Exhibit A

² Exhibit B

any landowner about the Greenbelt removals or urban boundary expansions prior to November 4, and each time the Minister refused to deny this.³

Recent Greenbelt Land Transfers

Rice Group

11. On November 18, 2022, the Toronto Star and the Narwhal published a joint investigative report titled “They recently bought Greenbelt land that was undevelopable. Now the Ford government is poised to remove protections — and these developers stand to profit”.⁴
12. In the article, the reports stated that 8 of the 15 properties being removed from the Greenbelt were acquired since 2018.
13. On September 15, 2022 — less than two months before the government's Greenbelt announcement on November 3, 2022 — Green Lane Bathurst GP Inc. purchased five parcels of land in a group sale for a total of \$80 million.⁵
14. The sales listing described the property as a “prime land banking opportunity”.⁶
15. The company, Green Lane Bathurst GP Inc. lists Michael Rice as its president.
16. A person with the name Michael Rice has donated more than \$10,000 to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario since 2018.⁷
17. The seller of the land above was Schickedanz Bros.⁸, whose principal Bob Schickedanz was president of the Ontario Homebuilders Association at the time of the sale.⁹
18. The property was purchased by the seller in 2000 for \$9.3 million.¹⁰
19. At the time of the sale, the CEO of the Ontario Homebuilders Association was Luca Bucci.
20. Lucci Bucci was the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing from January 2021 to April 2022 and departed just five months prior to the sale of the above mentioned property.¹¹

TACC Developments Vaughan Purchase

21. In May 2021, TACC Developments purchased 100 acres of farmland north of Canada's Wonderland in Vaughan for \$50 million.
22. Silvio DeGasperis is the President of TACC Construction Ltd and TACC Developments.
23. Silvio DeGasperis and members of the DeGasperis family are prominent donors to the Progressive Conservative Party.¹²

³ [Exhibit C](#)

⁴ [Exhibit D](#)

⁵ [Exhibit E](#)

⁶ [Exhibit F](#)

⁷ [Exhibit F.01](#)

⁸ [Exhibit G](#)

⁹ [Exhibit H](#)

¹⁰ [Exhibit I](#)

¹¹ [Exhibit J](#)

¹² [Exhibit K](#)

24. Large portions of the property purchased in May 2021 are in the Greenbelt and undevelopable at the time of purchase.
25. In an article published by the Globe and Mail on November 28, 2022, titled "Developers who bought Ontario Greenbelt land linked to Ford government" it was alleged that TACC Developments borrowed \$100 million from CIBC to cover the purchase, at an interest rate of 21 per cent annually.¹³

Orca Equity Whitchurch-Stouffville

26. In April 2020 and September 2021, companies controlled by private equity firm Orca Equity acquired two properties on McCowan Road in Whitchurch-Stouffville.
27. On November 15 2021, Minister Clark issued an MZO for these properties.¹⁴
28. The Orca Equity principal is Bernardino Quinto.
29. A Bernardino Quinto donated to the PC Party in 2018.¹⁵
30. The province is proposing to remove two parts of the Greenbelt in Stouffville. They intersect with land owned by three companies, including Orca Equity Ltd.¹⁶

Concerns regarding improper lobbying

31. As previously stated, Lucci Bucci was the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing from January 2021 to April 2022.
32. In June 2022, the Ontario Home Builders' Association announced that Mr. Bucci was selected as their new CEO.¹⁷
33. On August 17, 2022, Mr. Bucci registered to lobby the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on behalf of the Ontario Home Builders' Association (OHBA).¹⁸
34. Section 3.4 of the Lobbyist Registration Act (LRA) dictates that lobbyists shall not place a public office holder in a position of real or potential conflict of interest. The OICO's Interpretation Bulletin #11 warns that such a real or potential conflict of interest may occur if a former government staffer lobbies their former employer before a one-year cooling off period has ended.
35. Mr. Bucci's lobbyist registration indicated the following lobbying goals: "Communicating with government officials about land use and planning matters, including proposed or pending amendments to the (i) Development Charges Act, (ii) the Planning Act and (iii) the Conservation Authorities Act. [2] Communicating with government officials about approval of official plans under the Planning Act, including (i) the proposed "Peterborough Official Plan" and (ii) the proposed 'Ottawa Official Plan'."

¹³ Exhibit I

¹⁴ Exhibit L

¹⁵ Exhibit M

¹⁶ Exhibit E

¹⁷ Exhibit N

¹⁸ Exhibit O

36. Mr. Bucci has repeatedly communicated with ministry public office holders to influence legislative proposals, government policies, and other matters described in the definition of “lobbying” under the LRA.
37. On November 10, 2022, Mr. Bucci appeared before the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy on behalf of OHBA in support of Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*.¹⁹
38. On December 1, 2022, Mr. Bucci once again appeared before the same committee, in support of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing’s Bill 39, the *Better Municipal Governance Act*.

Concerns regarding a Pattern of Arbitrary Land Use Decisions Benefiting Particular Private Interests

39. In the November 18, 2022 Toronto Star/Narwhal Article, it was alleged that nine of the developers that would benefit from the Greenbelt changes donated significant sums to the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, totaling more than \$572,000 since 2014, the earliest year in Ontario’s political donations database.²⁰
40. Companies controlled by Silvio, Michael, and Carlo De Gasperis purchased a reported 1,775 acres of protected farmland within the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP).
41. According to reports in Toronto Star/Narwhal, most of this land was purchased nearly two decades ago for about \$6,600 an acre, after the Harris PC government sold these publicly owned properties at a discounted price with the claimed purpose of returning the land to farmers.
42. When Silvio De Gasperis subsequently acquired these discounted properties, they had easements protecting them as farmland in perpetuity. He immediately began lobbying to have these protections removed, which the City of Pickering did in 2005, contrary to a binding 1999 agreement between the City, the Region of Durham and the province of Ontario. This decision forced the provincial government to pass the *Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act* in 2005, restoring the farmland protections.
43. Silvio De Gasperis told the National Post in 2005 that without the protections these lands would be worth \$100,000 an acre.²¹
44. The speculative gains from removing these protections are very likely even higher today. The nearby Seaton lands sold for nearly \$400,000 an acre in 2016²²
45. According to the CBC, companies controlled by the De Gasperis purchased an additional 475 acres of DRAP farmland as recently as 2020.
46. According to Elections Ontario data, the De Gasperis brothers and their companies have donated at least \$163,362 to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario and its politicians since 2014.²³
47. The beneficiaries of multiple Greenbelt removals include some of the same beneficiaries of multiple MZOs listed in Figure 18 of the Auditor General’s 2021 report²⁴ on land use planning.

¹⁹ Exhibit P

²⁰ Exhibit D

²¹ Exhibit K

²² Exhibit P 0.1

²³ Exhibit K

²⁴ Exhibit Q 0.1

48. In that report, the Auditor General noted the arbitrary and non-transparent way in which MZO's were granted, and how certain developers like TACC and Flato received multiple MZO's. Quote: "Such a pattern opens the MZO process to criticisms of conflict of interest."²⁵
49. The minister has displayed a similar pattern in how he has selected lands for removal from the Greenbelt, which include multiple properties owned or controlled by TACC and Flato

The need for an investigation under the Members' Integrity Act

50. Section 2 of the Members' Integrity Act states, "A member of the Assembly shall not make a decision or participate in making a decision in the execution of his or her office if the member knows or reasonably should know that in the making of the decision there is an opportunity to further the member's private interest or improperly to further another person's private interest."
51. Section 3 states, "A member of the Assembly shall not use information that is obtained in his or her capacity as a member and that is not available to the general public to further or seek to further the member's private interest or improperly to further or seek to further another person's private interest".
52. I believe that the Minister may have breached section 2 of the Members' Integrity Act given the evidence stated above.
53. I believe that the Minister and/or his staff may have breached section 3 of the Members Integrity Act, given the ties between the Minister, his staff and prominent lobby groups, curious timing of land purchases and the Minister's repeated refusal to answer whether information had been inappropriately disclosed prior to November 4, 2022.
54. I have sworn this affidavit in support of my request under s. 30(1) of the *Member's Integrity Act* and for no other or improper purpose.

SWORN BEFORE ME at the City
of Toronto, Province of Ontario
this 8th day of December, 2022


Jasmine Aili Marie Attfield (72465V)

A COMMISSIONER, ETC.


Marit Stiles, MPP Davenport



Queen's Park Today – Daily Report November 18, 2022

Quotation of the day

“Ultimately, the members of the legislature will have to choose between serving the interests of developing industry or serving the interests of the taxpayers. It should not be a difficult choice.”

*Association of Municipalities of Ontario president **Colin Best** said **Bill 23**, More Homes Built Faster Act, puts the interests of developers ahead of the actual goal of creating affordable housing. More on this below.*

Today at Queen's Park

Written by Alan S. Hale

On the schedule

The legislature will resume on Monday, November 21.

Thursday's debates and proceedings

In the morning, MPPs began second reading of **Bill 39**, Better Municipal Governance Act, which continued throughout the day.

After question period, NDP MPP **Kristyn Wong-Tam** put forward a motion aiming to get **Bill 42**, Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act, fast-tracked through second and third readings without debate, which was defeated.

“Gender-affirming health care is life-saving care,” Wong-Tam said afterwards. “Passing this bill would be the first step in reversing a health-care system that has long abandoned Two-Spirit, Trans, Intersex, and Gender-Diverse Ontarians. If **Doug Ford** and the minister of health were

serious about fixing the health-care system for everyone, they would not have delayed this bill's passage."

The house then voted to pass **Bill 36**, Progress on the Plan to Build Act, at second reading (Ayes 74; Nays 30). It's off to the finance and economic affairs committee.

NDP MPPs **Bhutila Karpoche** and **Peter Tabuns**' **Bill 14**, No Time to Waste Act (Plan for Climate Action and Jobs), was debated during private members' business. A vote was deferred.

Premier watch

Today, Premier **Doug Ford** will be in Timmins with Mines Minister **George Pirie** and Newmont's general manager of operations for Porcupine **Dawid Pretorius** to make an announcement.

Ford and Indigenous Affairs Minister **Greg Rickford** gave a speech in front of Indigenous leaders from across the province on Wednesday evening at the fall assembly of the Chiefs of Ontario.

Yesterday, Ford spoke in front of members of the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board at their fall annual meeting, where he talked up the government's housing agenda. He also shared a [photo](#) of himself and Health Minister **Sylvia Jones** meeting with the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association at Queen's Park.

At the park

There was bluster and confusion at the heritage committee Thursday morning when its proceedings on **Bill 23**, More Homes Built Faster Act, were abruptly halted during witness testimony.

PC MPP **Laurie Scott**, who chairs the committee, later clarified the government wasn't shutting down the hearings on purpose, but had to pause the committee's deliberations because the PC's other municipal affairs and housing-related legislation, **Bill 39**, was being debated simultaneously in the chamber.

The standing orders dictate that two bills in the same "policy field" can't be studied by committee and in the chamber at the same time. A government motion was later passed overriding the relevant standing order, allowing hearings to resume in the afternoon.

'Favouritism': AMO and Toronto blast Bill 23 as putting the interests of developers ahead of affordability

Officials from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) — which represents 444 municipalities across Ontario — said it was "surprising" they weren't allowed to testify at the heritage, infrastructure and cultural policy committee hearings on **Bill 23**, which wrapped up on Thursday despite calls from the opposition to have them extended.

Instead, the NDP set up its own hearing on Zoom yesterday so that AMO president **Colin Best** and executive director **Brian Rosborough** could make their presentation anyway.

Best derided the bill as being in the interest of property developers while doing nothing to help with housing affordability. It will also harm the environment and blow a \$5.1-billion hole in municipal finances by 2031, he said.

To that end, AMO — which rarely takes a hard stand against government policy — believes the bill's terms amount to “corporate subsidies” for property developers at the expense of municipalities and their residents.

“If the government wishes to create financial incentives for the industry, it should do so in a transparent and forthright manner and finance the initiative with provincial tax revenues. There is no evidence to suggest that subsidizing the costs of private sector developers will result in lower housing prices. It's trickle-down economics,” said Best.

AMO predicts that unless the money being taken away from municipalities is reimbursed by the province, it will lead to property tax hikes, cuts to public services and parks, “deteriorating communities,” and layoffs of municipal workers.

He also warned that taking away powers from conservation authorities and reducing green building standards “does not make sense,” and would lead to “flooded basements and flooded highways,” as well as other environmental and economic costs.

“Those who believe that making the industry more profitable through economic subsidies and relaxed environmental protections will make housing more affordable are mistaken,” said Best.

“Ultimately, the members of the legislature will have to choose between serving the interests of developing industry or serving the interests of the taxpayers. It should not be a difficult choice.”

Best and Rosborough also criticized the government's proposal to overrule local councils opposed to expanding their municipal boundaries by adding parcels of land to several communities that are currently protected from development as part of the Greenbelt.

On Thursday, the *Star* and the *Narwhal* published [a joint investigation](#) looking into the PC-linked developers who own eight of the 15 parcels in question, including the De Gasperis family.

In his press conference on Wednesday, Municipal Affairs Minister **Steve Clark** acknowledged he had spoken with developers before the announcement of the Greenbelt plans were made, and waived off any appearance of impropriety, saying the government is willing to work with anyone who wants to help build 1.5 million homes over the next decade.

Best said it is clear that the PC government is putting the interests of its allies over what municipalities want and need.

“I’ve been a councillor for 33 years, and I’ve never seen this type of favouritism,” he said in response to a question from *Queen’s Park Today*.

Best stopped short of calling it corruption, however. He emphasized that AMO still wants to work with the government and builders to revamp the legislation.

The committee heard from the City of Toronto’s chief planner, **Gregg Lintern** yesterday, who echoed many of AMO’s statements. (Toronto is one of the few municipalities in Ontario not a member of AMO.)

Lintern noted there is no way to ensure developers actually pass savings onto homebuyers, especially since prices are determined by market forces and not by just how much it costs to build.

“The revenue loss will dramatically impact Toronto’s finances and be unaffordable for existing taxpayers to fully fund. As a result, the city would have no choice but to postpone or not proceed with many capital projects,” he said. “These revenue losses will limit our ability to advance the necessary infrastructure in tandem with the new [housing] supply.”



Premier
Ford,

Jones won’t rule out increased health-care privatization to deal with mounting crises

The day after it was [revealed](#) that Health Minister **Sylvia Jones**’ August speaking notes were edited to not unambiguously promise not to privatize the health-care system, opposition parties

renewed their accusations that the government is undermining public health-care delivery to justify increasingly privatizing the system.

“We all know the premier will use the long wait times, the overcrowding and the emergency room closures to justify bringing in U.S.-style health care to Ontario. He’ll say we need to innovate just like **Mike Harris** did when he privatized our home care system,” said NDP Health critic **France Gélinas** during question period yesterday.

“Why is this government so determined to dismantle our publicly funded, publicly delivered health-care system?”

Jones’ parliamentary assistant **Robin Martin** shot back that the NDP was asking about a “fantasy that they think might be happening in the future.” But when pressed by *Queen’s Park Today* yesterday to rule out such a scenario, Jones refused to do so explicitly.

Instead, she argued the budget speaks for itself.

“You only need to look at our most recent budget that was passed in August of this year. That was a \$5-billion increase in the health-care budget for the province,” said Jones at a press conference announcing \$182 million for upgrades and repairs to 131 hospitals. “[The budget] sends a very clear message to our health-care partners that we are supporting public health systems.”

In August, Jones was set to promise Ontarians her government is “not privatizing health care. Full stop.” Until, that is, a government staffer crossed that talking point out and replaced it with a promise that Ontarians would still use their “OHIP card, not a credit card,” to pay for medical services — a line the government has continued to use since — leaving open the possibility of using private companies to deliver those services and have the government pay for it.

When asked who removed that pledge from her talking points, Jones refused to say.

“I’m going to answer that question the same way I answered that question in question period that day, and that was: ‘No, no, no,’” said Jones.

(What Jones said [in the house that day](#) was: “No, no, no. OHIP cards are used in the province of Ontario to fund publicly funded health-care systems. That will continue under our watch.”)

Opposition renews concerns over privatization

During the summer, the government announced it would use private surgical clinics to help deal with the surgical and diagnostic backlog.

The PCs have also argued repeatedly that the “status quo” in the health-care system isn’t working and that “innovation” is needed, without making clear exactly what that means. Green Party Leader **Mike Schreiner** said it’s not hard to discern.

“It’s been clear for a few months now that the government, through ‘innovation,’ is interested in opening up health care to privatization,” Schreiner told reporters yesterday.

“We need the health minister and the premier to be explicit — clearly explicit — with the people of Ontario, that they will not privatize, further, delivery of health care in this province.”

Liberal Health critic **Adil Shamji** agreed, also pointing to the increased use of private nursing agencies to deal with labour shortages rather than repealing **Bill 124**.

“Privatization is coming down. It is on the agenda with this government,” said Shamji.

The renewed concerns about the government’s intentions come as pediatric hospitals continue to strain under the surge of kids coming in with the flu or other respiratory illnesses, which has overwhelmed pediatric ICUs and led to some young patients being treated in adult facilities.

Jones has insisted the government had anticipated the surge and was prepared for it, pointing to steps taken in facilities such as the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario to convert wards to provide more capacity.

“Are we challenged because of human health resources, because of the need for additional health-care staff? Absolutely we are. But the innovation and co-operation that is happening between hospitals and adult-focused hospitals is unprecedented,” said Jones.

[As of yesterday](#), 114 kids were in Ontario’s 112 pediatric ICU beds, down slightly from last week.

Today’s events

November 18 at 11 a.m. — Timmins

Premier **Doug Ford** and Mining Minister **George Pirie** will make an announcement alongside the general manager of the Porcupine gold mine.

Topics of conversation

- With CUPE’s education workers legally able to strike again on Monday, the union says it and the government will “spend all weekend at the table” trying to hammer out a deal.
 - Both parties agreed to a deadline of 5 p.m. on Sunday evening. That way, if a strike is going to happen, parents will find out by then.

- Toronto Mayor **John Tory** promised to use the ability to pass bylaws with only the support of one-third of council — which he asked the government to enact via **Bill 39**, Better Municipal Governance Act — in a “very, very limited” number of instances. The only time he would do it, he said, would be if he could not secure majority support from council.
 - “I will work very hard to collaborate with city council [first],” said Tory. “I got a strong mandate.”
 - Toronto city councillor **Jamaal Myers** issued a statement yesterday opposing **Bill 39**, saying that it’s “particularly disappointing that the mayor requested this power while making no mention of it during the campaign.”
- Queen’s Park players were well represented on *Toronto Life*’s [ranking of influential Torontonians](#), with Premier **Doug Ford** taking the number three spot for the second year in a row. Premier’s office staffers **Jamie Wallace**, **Ivana Yelich**, **Cody Welton**, **Travis Kann** and new principal secretary **Patrick Sackville** all got shout-outs, while pollster **Nick Kouvalis** took the No. 34 spot.
 - Attorney General **Doug Downey** got spot No. 24 for his role in rolling out iGaming, while conservative strategist **Jenni Byrne** is at No. 21.
 - Ministers **Stephen Lecce** and **Prabmeet Sarkaria** fell off the list, after winning spots last year.
- The federal government appears to be warming up to the idea of funding the Ring of Fire, with an official telling the House of Commons’ natural resources committee yesterday the region has the potential to be “mined for decades” to come.
 - **Lucie Perreault**, executive director of programs at the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (FedNor), said Ottawa is aiming to back projects that “move beyond simple extraction and into value-added production.” She noted the Ring of Fire contains chromite nickel concentrations “worth up to \$60 billion.”
 - Premier **Doug Ford** has pushed Ottawa to back his efforts since 2019, while the feds have maintained they will only pitch in with buy-in from all impacted First Nations. Ottawa’s spring budget has \$1.5 billion set aside to back infrastructure that can help in securing key mineral supplies.
 - At this week’s fall assembly of the Chiefs of Ontario, sentiments were overwhelmingly against the project, as the leader of Neskantaga First Nation — whose territory includes the Ring of Fire — declared his community will do everything in its power to prevent the project unless it gets a “big say” in how the Ring of Fire will be operated.
- Ontario’s current immigration agreement with Ottawa expires next Thursday, leading the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to issue a release pressing the feds to heed the province’s demands and double the provincial nominee program.

- “Provincial governments are uniquely positioned to best understand their respective labour market needs,” said CEO **Rocco Rossi**, who also called for “a long-term commitment to newcomer training.”

Appointments and employments

OLP executive director joins Del Duca at city hall

- **Ian Hall**, the executive director of the Ontario Liberal Party, announced he has been hired as chief of staff to new Vaughan Mayor **Steven Del Duca**, who was [sworn in](#) Tuesday.

Electrification and Energy Transition Panel gets new members

- The panel Energy Minister **Todd Smith** [quietly struck](#) this spring to advise the government on how to prepare for a more electrified future has gained some new members:
 - **Howard Wetston**, a former senator and past chair of the Ontario Energy Board;
 - **Monica Gattinger**, former CEO of the Electrical Safety Authority and past CEO of Burlington Hydro Electric Inc.; and
 - Chief emeritus **Emily Whetung**, former chief of Curve Lake First Nation.
- The Ministry of Energy is also commissioning a “cost-effective energy pathways study” to help guide the energy planning process “by better coordinating the fuels and the electricity sector.”

News briefs

Hitachi gets \$9B Ontario Line contract

- Infrastructure Ontario has awarded Hitachi Rail’s Connect 6ix consortium the \$9-billion contract to deliver the Ontario Line’s rolling stock (trains), systems, operations and maintenance package.
 - The Japanese firm said its trains will be electrified, driverless and travel up to 80 km/h. (It also has the contract for the forthcoming Hurontario LRT.)
 - “Hitachi Rail’s world-leading digital train control systems will allow the fleet to run at high frequency – up to every 90 seconds – meaning passengers will never have to wait long for a train.”

Construction union coalition given cash to lead skilled trades program

- As Labour Minister **Monte McNaughton** aims to rebuild the PC’s relationship with trades unions, he announced Thursday the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario will be given \$3.5 million to lead new skills trade programs for students.
 - The council is made up of 12 construction unions with a provincewide membership of 150,000 workers.

Question period

NDP questions

Doing Ford's bidding

- NDP MPP **Jeff Burch** blasted the PCs for **Bill 39**'s proposal to appoint the chairs of several GTA regional councils, suggesting Premier **Doug Ford** is seeking to control those bodies.
 - "The premier is going to handpick who he wants to rule in his stead as he hands them additional powers to do his bidding. Why is the premier showing such disdain for municipalities and turning local democracy into his own personal sandbox?" asked Burch.
- Municipal Affairs Minister **Steve Clark** snidely remarked that he'd like to know why Burch "doesn't support a great parliamentarian like **Jim Bradley**," who he intends to reappoint as the chair of Niagara Region. Bradley was a PC MPP until 2018.
 - "Premier Ford made it crystal clear to Ontarians that the *Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act* was just the start," Clark continued. "The announcements yesterday in **Bill 39**, which it was pretty obvious that New Democrats don't support — just add to the litany of housing initiatives this government has done."
- Clark said he is not surprised that the NDP will oppose the bill "under the leadership of **Marit Stiles**." Stiles is the only leadership candidate for the party.

Piccini at COP27

- NDP interim Leader **Peter Tabuns** noted that Environment Minister **David Piccini** is in Egypt this week attending the COP27 climate change conference, and suggested that the minister wouldn't have much useful to add to the proceedings while he's opening up Greenbelt lands to development at home.
 - "What wisdom can the environment minister share at the climate conference in Egypt when he's enabling some of the worst attacks on the environment I have ever seen, here in Ontario?" wondered Tabuns.
- Piccini's parliamentary assistant **John Yakabuski** relayed the minister's "greetings" from the conference.
 - "He's glad to be there, representing Ontario and, indeed, Canada," said Yakabuski, before arguing Ontario is "well on target" to meet its climate change goals.

Food bank use increasing

- NDP MPP **Doly Begum** noted the 2022 Daily Bread Food Bank report shows there has been a 29 per cent increase in food bank use in Scarborough and many food-insecure

adults are missing a meal each day because they don't have money for food.

- Finance Minister **Peter Bethlenfalvy** noted the PCs had provided "relief" by raising the minimum wage and giving refunds on licence plate sticker fees.

NDP MPPs also asked about face masks, issues at the hospital in Hearst and gender-affirming care.

Independent questions

Liberal MPP **Mitzie Hunter** asked about the CUPE labour dispute.

PC questions

PC MPPs asked their ministers about economic development in the auto sector, violence against women and support for crime victims.

Lobbyist registrations

Consultants who registered, renewed or amended registrations from November 11 to November 17, 2022

- **John Allen**, Global Public Affairs Inc.
 - Clients: Career Find, Future of Infrastructure Group
- **Andrew Retfalvi**, Global Public Affairs Inc.
 - Clients: Hologic Canada ULC
- **Bonnie Hiltz**, Sussex Strategy Group Inc.
 - Clients: Atlantic Power Corp., BluEarth Renewables Inc., ENGIE Canada Inc., Canadian Renewable Energy Association
- **Chris Benedetti**, Sussex Strategy Group
 - Clients: Aecon Group Inc.
- **Christina Marciano**, Sussex Strategy Group Inc.
 - Clients: Enwave Energy Corp.
- **Clare Michaels**, Navigator Ltd.
 - Clients: Kraft Heinz Canada
- **David McArthur**, McMillan Vantage Policy Group
 - Clients: NextBridge Energy Transmission Canada

- **Marisa Maslink**, McMillan Vantage
 - Clients: Proofpoint Inc., Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries
- **Samuel Duncan**, Wellington Advocacy
 - Clients: United Association Local 787 - HVACR Workers of Ontario
- **Andrea van Vugt**, Wellington Advocacy
 - Clients: Detroit International Bridge Corporation, LLC
- **Trisha Rinneard**, Wellington Advocacy
 - Clients: Ontario Real Estate Association
- **Stefano Hollands**, Crestview Strategy
 - Clients: Capital Sports Development Inc.
- **Sarina Rehal**, Crestview Strategy
 - Clients: S.C. Johnson & Son, Ltd.
- **Ralph Palumbo**, The Hillcrest Consulting Group Inc.
 - Clients: Hugh's Room for the Performing Arts Inc.
- **Michael Mazzuca**, Koskie Minsky LLP
 - Clients: LiUNA Pension Fund of Central and Eastern Canada
- **John Armstrong**, Armstrong Communications Inc.
 - Clients: Ontario Kinesiology Association
- **Jeff Bolichowski**, Armstrong Communications Inc.
 - Clients: Masonry Works Council of Ontario
- **Robert Stephens**, Public Relations Post Inc.
 - Clients: Canadian Council of Independent Laboratories
- **Ben Levitt**, Stosic & Associates
 - Clients: OMNI Health Care
- **Andres Martinez**, StrategyCorp Inc.
 - Clients: Lansdowne Children's Centre Foundation
- **Sabine (John) Matheson**, StrategyCorp Inc.
 - Clients: McKesson Canada
- **Tim Smitheman**, Rubicon Strategy

- Clients: South Essex Fabricating Inc.
- **Aaron Gairdner**, Rubicon Strategy Inc.
 - Clients: Joint Electrical Promotion Plan
- **Jim Burnett**, Pathway Group Inc.
 - Clients: Coach Canada, Assaulted Women's Helpline
- **Cody Mallette**, Atlas Strategic Advisors Inc.
 - Clients: HumanisRx Corp.
- **Harvey Cooper**, Cooper Consultancy
 - Clients: Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada
- **Charles Harnick**, Counsel Public Affairs Inc.
 - Clients: Algonquin Park Residents Association
- **Andrew House**, Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP
 - Clients: Voyce, Inc.
- **Laura Grosman**, Hill+Knowlton Strategies
 - Clients: X-energy Canada Inc.

Organizations that registered in-house lobbyists from November 11 to November 17, 2022

- Trent University
- REALpac- Real Property Association of Canada
- Toyota Canada Incorporated

Queen's Park Today is written by Alan S. Hale, reporting from the Queen's Park Press Gallery.

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DEVELOPERS HIT PAY DIRT WITH GREENBELT LAND, PROMPTING CALLS FOR TRANSPARENCY

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Developers hit pay dirt with Greenbelt land, prompting calls for transparency

 17.11.2022  Jack Hauen  0

Premier Doug Ford has sold his plan to open up swaths of Ontario's Greenbelt to development as a necessary step to build enough homes to house everyone in Ontario.

It could also be a massive boon for land developers with connections to Ford and his governing Progressive Conservative party.

The opposition is raising questions about "political corruption" in the legislature and it's ignited calls for more transparency in the relationships between elected officials and their developer donors.

Housing Minister Steve Clark's team didn't respond to multiple requests for a list of landowners whose previously untouchable farmland could transform into valuable, developable acreage overnight.



Teams of journalists and researchers [with the CBC](#) and the [Toronto Star](#) spent days digging up

teams of journalists and researchers [with the CBC](#) and [the Toronto Star](#) spent days digging up information on the ownership of the land in question. In most cases, the owners are private corporations, requiring another search for the directors of those companies.

But what if that information was as open to the public as a Google search?

British Columbia has what's known as a beneficial ownership [registry](#) for land. It's a publicly searchable database of the people who buy land through shell corporations, partnerships or trusts.

The B.C. government implemented it in 2020 after investigations revealed the province was a top destination for money laundering in Canada. Ontario is also a prime target for so-called "[snow washing](#)."

"There's a lot of land that is sold by people who we just don't want doing business in Ontario," said Sasha Caldera, the campaign manager of beneficial ownership transparency for [Publish What You Pay Canada](#). "And I'm talking about organized crime in particular" – including drug trafficking, underground casinos and weapons caches operated by shell companies, he said.

The federal government is working on creating a national corporate beneficial ownership registry by next year. [It has Ontario's co-operation](#). But that registry won't include land or property owners.

The last budget said the federal government intends to explore establishing a beneficial ownership registry of real property – land and buildings – but work with the provinces on that has not yet begun, according to a spokesperson for Ontario's Ministry of Finance.

READ MORE: [Provincial progress on corporate transparency slower than we'd like: feds](#)

It's also important to know who the ultimate owner of land is since Ontario's housing crisis is being partly driven by anonymous flippers and money launderers buying properties, Caldera said.

B.C.'s model is "excellent," but it could be improved by adding an ID check and signed attestation to verify the data; that way, those fixing the system could be more easily held legally accountable, Caldera said. Currently, B.C. relies on owners to accurately report information.

At the federal level, a Conservative MP is calling for it to be a criminal offence, with penalties including jail time, to lie to a financial institution about one's identity or the beneficial ownership structure of a corporation.

ADAM CHAMBERS: [We owe it to our kids to combat money laundering](#)

Opposition parties have already proposed a beneficial land ownership registry in Ontario just like B.C.'s.

The NDP's [Bill 8](#), the Anti-Money Laundering in Housing Act, passed first reading in August. It would require the housing minister to make a plan to create a registry.



Bell's co-author said the planned federal registry has "massive loopholes" since trusts, joint

ben, its co-author, said the planned federal registry has massive loopholes, since trusts, joint partnerships and businesses incorporated outside of Ontario won't have to register.

Plus, only government officials will be able to see the registry, she said.

"A public land registry would make it much easier to identify who owns parcels of land in Ontario, including Greenbelt land owned by secretive numbered corporations," she said.

Green Leader Mike Schreiner also called for such a registry in his 2022 election platform.

"And the fact that the parcels of the Greenbelt that have been opened up for development are primarily owned by wealthy land speculators, some of whom just purchased that land in the last few months, raises serious questions about why the province actually opened this land up for development and who's going to benefit from those development decisions," he said.

Interim Liberal leader John Fraser said his "first question" when he heard the government's announcement was, "Which one of Doug Ford's friends is going to benefit the most?"

"That's a good question to ask. It should be open and transparent. It's not," he said.

A number of developers could soon see their investments pay off.

Some of the names you're about to read may be familiar.

There's an overlap between the developers who stand to benefit from the government's Greenbelt decision and its [plan to build Highway 413](#), according to property and corporate records obtained by *QP Briefing* in partnership with the *Toronto Star* library. (*QP Briefing* is co-owned by Torstar and iPolitics.)

The DeGasperis family of TACC Developments, who [built much of the 905 area](#), owns large swaths of the land the Ford government is considering green-lighting for development. It also purchased a parcel in Vaughan in May 2021 for \$50,000, a large section of which is part of the greenbelt land the Ford government is planning to open up.

Silvio DeGasperis, the face of the family, was [looking to develop](#) Ontario's Greenbelt in the 2000s. His family had bought many parcels of land that could now be opened for development in 2003.

Two companies associated with DeGasperis were [ordered to pay \\$702,000](#) in legal costs after he launched multiple "vexatious" challenges of the McGuinty government's Greenbelt plan.

Michael DeGasperis hosted Ford and his then-parliamentary assistant, Vaughan MPP Stephen Lecce, at a Florida Panthers NHL game in the DeGasperis family box, according to [an investigation by the *Toronto Star* and the *National Observer*](#) into developers that stand to benefit from the Ford government's decision to build Highway 413.

Donors with the names Silvio DeGasperis and Michael DeGasperis have each donated [thousands](#) to the PCs.



Some developers purchased soon-to-be-developable Greenbelt land over the next year, which the

some developers purchased soon-to-be-developable Greenbelt land over the past year, which the NDP called "fishy."

Rice Group, headed by president and CEO Michael Rice, bought a parcel in September for \$80,000,000. A donor by the name of Michael Rice has also given [thousands](#) to the PCs.

Markham developer Wyview Group bought hundreds of acres last year. The company posted on Facebook about the premier's visit to one of their sites in September.

TACC, Rice Group and Wyview Group didn't respond to individual requests for comment.

Asked whether he gave any developers advance notice about the decision, Housing Minister Steve Clark told *QP Briefing* he meets with builders all the time.

"It doesn't matter whether they're private homebuilders, whether they're not-for-profits, whether it's Habitat for Humanity, whether it's a builder that builds 1,000 homes a year or one home a year. We meet with people that are in the housing space. That's part of being the housing minister," he said.



"He said to you many times, it doesn't matter who you are. If you're looking at assisting the

I've said to you many times, it doesn't matter who you are. If you're looking at assisting the government of Ontario with building 1.5 million homes, we want to work with you."

NDP housing critic Jessica Bell noted the developers bought the land when it was zoned for farming, meaning they stand to make a heftier profit than if they bought development-ready land.

"It does look like the government is helping their wealthy developer donor friends at the expense of municipalities, farmland, green space and our climate action goals," she said.

"From my perspective and the public's perspective, it looks like something fishy is going on."

Ford hasn't been shy about his desire to develop the Greenbelt. In a [recording](#) before he was first elected in 2018, the future premier promised to "open a big chunk" of the protected area. He backed down after outrage, promising not to touch the area.

The government spent almost a year in talks with a developer and PC donor about developing the Greenbelt, CBC [reported](#) in 2019. Clark said at the time the government's pledge to avoid the Greenbelt was still intact.

Ford promised to "unleash the contractors" in a 2019 fireside chat — noting that Silvio DeGasperis, sitting in the crowd, had an "ear-to-ear smile when I say that."

With files from Aidan Chamandy

Law and Safety, Municipalities, Transit and Infrastructure, Natural Resources, News

♥ 0



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JACK HAUEN

Torstar



Hansard Transcript November 29

Government accountability

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On November 16, the minister said he spoke with developers prior to announcing that lands would be removed from the greenbelt. The minister needs to clarify his remarks. Did the minister or any other government or PC Party official share with any landowner information about the government's plan to remove lands from the greenbelt before it became public?

Hon. Steve Clark: I watched this member on CP24 yesterday. I've heard her in the House. She mischaracterizes Bill 23 often.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Steve Clark: Withdraw, Speaker.

Our government was crystal clear with Ontarians during the election that we wanted to build more homes, provide more choice, give mayors stronger powers and have a plan in place to build 1.5 million homes.

I've said in this House countless times that I will meet with anyone—a municipal official, a not-for-profit, Habitat for Humanity, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, people who build one home a year, people who build 1,000 homes a year. We need every partner non-profit in the public space, every partner in the private space if we're going to build—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I couldn't hear the minister.

Supplementary.

1050

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the minister: Last week, the CBC reported that a group of land speculators purchased 37 hectares of farmland outside Ottawa's urban boundary last year, and then, earlier this month, the minister overrode the city's official plan and put these lands within the urban boundary, making these very lucky speculators instantly richer. Coincidentally, these speculators, together, donated more than \$12,000 to the PC Party last year and this year.

My question is to the minister. Did the minister or any other government or PC Party official share with any landowner information about the government's plan to add lands to Ottawa's urban boundary before it became public?

Hon. Steve Clark: This member looked in the camera yesterday and said that Bill 23 cut affordable housing dollars—not true. In fact, Bill 23 actually works collaboratively with the Minister of Infrastructure to create a new attainable housing program on government-owned lands, something that everyone can agree on.

I'm not going to take any lessons from the NDP's jiggery-pokery in terms of how we're going to put housing forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're not going to allow "jiggery-pokery." You've got to withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Minister, what I'm not hearing from you is a no. I'm going to ask again: Did the minister or any other government or PC Party official share

with any landowner information about the government's plan to remove lands from the greenbelt before it became public? Yes or no?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to respond.

Hon. Steve Clark: That's public. We're encouraging Ontarians to provide comment on the Environmental Registry of Ontario.

The plan is simple, Speaker. The plan is simple. We're going to add to have a net gain of over 2,000 acres to the greenbelt, and the 15 properties involved will provide us with a minimum of 50,000 homes to help get to the 1.5-million home target over the next 10 years.

The government has said—all of the bills we tabled; yesterday was my 10th—that we we're going to put forward a plan that's going to get us closer to that. Every policy, every posting, every opportunity we're providing for comment in this Legislature puts us closer to that 1.5-million goal to allow the families who want to realize the dream of home ownership, the seniors who want to downsize and the new Canadians who want to have a home that meets their needs and their budget—that's what every policy we're putting forward as a government gets us closer to.

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STAR/THE NARWHAL

They recently bought Greenbelt land that was undevelopable. Now the Ford government is poised to remove protections — and these developers stand to profit

An association representing developers said the GTA is in “the midst of a housing crisis” and more homes are needed to meet increased demand.

By **Noor Javed** Staff Reporter

Brendan Kennedy Social Justice Investigative Reporter

Emma McIntosh The Narwhal

Thu., Nov. 17, 2022 | 13 min. read

🕒 Article was updated Nov. 18, 2022

In September, a company run by a prominent Ontario developer paid \$80 million for two parcels of land that could not be developed. Totalling nearly 700 acres, they sit entirely within Ontario’s protected Greenbelt.

Weeks later, that investment by Michael Rice is set to pay off. The seemingly untouchable swath of fields and trees in King Township, just north of Toronto, is now on the Ontario government’s list of lands it wants to remove from the Greenbelt. If the change goes through, the properties Rice purchased in September could be ripe for development, and worth far more than \$80 million.

Of the 15 areas slated to be removed from the Greenbelt, eight include properties purchased in the four years since the election of Doug Ford, who in 2018 was recorded [telling a private audience he would “open a big chunk” of the protected area](#) should he become premier, a Toronto Star/Narwhal investigation has found.

Other properties impacted by the Ontario government announcement have been held for years or decades.



Developers owning [Greenbelt](#) land now set to be developed appear to have given significant sums to Ford's Progressive Conservative party, donation records show. Lobbying records reveal connections between the party and five of the landowners who will benefit most from the proposed changes.

The timing is raising questions about whether the landowners knew the lands would soon become developable and profitable — or if they simply took a gamble and won.

“Nobody would pay this amount of money for land if they didn't think it was going to be open for development,” said Phil Pothén of the non-profit Environmental Defence.

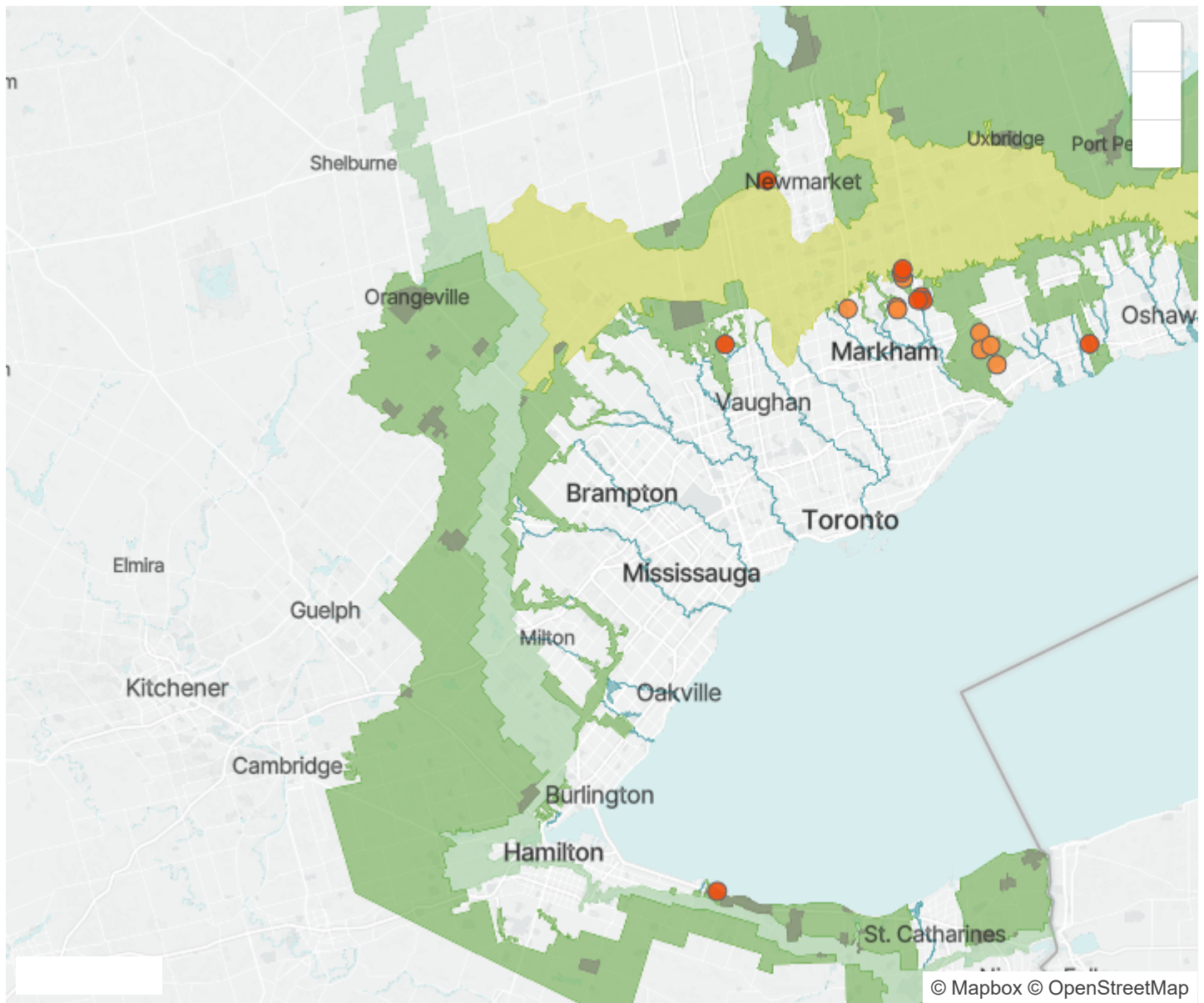
Rice is chief executive officer of Rice Group; neither he nor the company responded to questions for this story. King Township's municipal council is asking the province to limit housing on the lands and [fast-track](#) a hospital project there instead.

The Star/Narwhal analysis of property records and corporate documents shows at least six developers bought parcels of land since 2018 that include portions of Greenbelt now set to be removed from the protected area.

Here's who owns the land Doug Ford wants to remove from the Greenbelt

Each dot on the map represents property within the areas slated to be opened up to housing development. Hovering over/tapping the dots will reveal who owns the land, when they purchased it and for how much.

- Notable properties purchased after Doug Ford's election in June 2018
- Properties purchased before June 2018 [👉 on the map for details about each property](#)



GREENBELT COMPONENTS:

Niagara Escarpment

Protected countryside

Oak Ridges Moraine

Urban river valley

Towns or villages inside the Greenbelt

TACC Developments, headed by prominent developer Silvio De Gasperis, paid \$50 million in May 2021 for 100 acres of farmland north of Canada's Wonderland in Vaughan. Large portions of the property are in the Greenbelt and were undevelopable at the time the land was purchased. If Ford's proposal goes through, a lucrative chunk alongside Pine Valley Rd. will be cleared for houses.

An executive assistant at the company said De Gasperis was out of the country for a family wedding and unable to respond to questions for this story.

Collectively, the developers who purchased land within the Greenbelt since Ford was elected spent more than \$278 million, according to land registry documents.

With Ford's decision to open them for development, the land values could skyrocket. The government, which is mandated to consult the public about the changes for 30 days, could finalize them as soon as early December.

"Wealthy developers stand to gain huge amounts of money when farmland is rezoned for development," said Jessica Bell, the NDP housing critic. "They buy the land cheap, and they can sell it or develop it for incredible profit."



The Star/Narwhal reached out to every developer named in this story. Most did not respond.

After detailed questions were sent to several developers, a spokesperson for the Ontario Home Builders' Association and Building Industry and Land Development Association emailed an unsolicited statement. They said the statement was not from any developer in particular.

"We are in the midst of a housing crisis in the GTA," the statement reads. "When the Greenbelt was created, its boundaries encompassed not just environmentally sensitive lands but also farmland and land that had previously been designated for growth for housing and employment spaces.

"Sensationalizing this matter by focusing on anything other than the outcome, the building of more homes to meet increasing demand due to population growth, will be a disservice to readers and residents."

Victor Doyle, a former provincial planner often credited as an architect of the Greenbelt, said in an interview that he worries the land swap sets a precedent for other developers to push to have their lands removed as well.

"Where did the government actually get the list of proposed properties that they want to remove?" Doyle said. "It raises all sorts of suspicions about connections between the government and the landowners in question."



The office of Steve Clark, Ontario's minister of municipal affairs and housing, did not directly answer questions for this story, including how the parcels to be removed were selected and whether property owners had advance knowledge of their proposal.

In a news conference on Wednesday afternoon, Clark told reporters it's part of his job as housing minister to meet and work with developers of all kinds.

"It doesn't matter who you are," he said. "If you're looking at assisting the Government of Ontario in building 1.5 million homes, we want to work with you."

A spokesperson for Clark said in a statement the land is needed to ensure Ontario has enough homes to accommodate existing residents and the federal government's immigration targets.

"The fifteen sites identified had to meet very clear criteria that meant homes could be built quickly," Victoria Podbielski said in an email.

Earlier this year, Ontario's government-appointed Housing Affordability Task Force said a shortage of land [isn't the cause of the province's housing crisis](#). "Land is available, both inside the existing built-up areas and on undeveloped land outside greenbelts."



The Greenbelt is an 800,000-hectare swath of farmland, forests and wetlands that stretches from Niagara to Port Hope. It was created in 2005 by Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government to preserve farmland, protect environmentally sensitive areas and rein in sprawl in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

There were some towns and homes in the Greenbelt area already. But generally, the legislation has meant new development there is prohibited.

In 2018, before becoming premier, Ford was recorded at an event pitching development in the Greenbelt, an idea he credited to "some of the biggest developers in this country." He quickly reversed course amid public backlash, promising repeatedly ever since that he'd never touch it. Until now.

Doug Ford discusses opening up the Green Belt to the biggest developers



different mechanisms.

Ford has defended his government's flip-flop on the Greenbelt, saying it was necessary to achieve the goal of building 1.5 million homes in the next decade.

"We're in an unprecedented time when it comes to housing," Ford said.

The spokesperson for the developers' associations noted that the government has imposed "strict timelines" for building on the lands slated to be removed from the Greenbelt. Developers must show significant progress on their plans by next year with construction started by 2025. Otherwise the land will be returned to the Greenbelt.

Some of the parcels Ontario wants to remove from the Greenbelt are adjacent to land that's already been developed with highways and subdivisions. Others are greener, surrounded by creeks and brush and farmers' fields. The province said it chose parcels on the edges of the Greenbelt. Environmentalists have argued that even pieces on the fringe are key for ensuring a supply of food grown in Ontario, and keeping wildlife habitats intact and connected. Land that isn't paved over also absorbs water when it rains, which mitigates floods.

The Star/Narwhal investigation analyzed political donations by the developers, their companies, their families and senior staff members. It appears that nine of the developers that stand to benefit most from Ford's Greenbelt land swap have donated significant sums to the Ontario Progressive Conservative party, totalling more than \$572,000 since 2014, the earliest year in Ontario's political donations database.

Many also donated to other parties, but far less: just over \$326,000 altogether, most of which went to the Ontario Liberals when that party was in government.

While names match, The Star/Narwhal cannot independently verify they are the same people. Common names were excluded from the analysis. The Star/Narwhal sent the donations records to the developers and they either did not respond or did not dispute them.

Rice's companies, someone with his name, and people whose names match those of his senior staff, have donated \$47,000 to the Progressive Conservatives since 2014.

Another major donor is the De Gasperis family. Names that match those of family members, their companies and senior staff donated \$294,000 to the Tories. The De Gasperis family holds some Greenbelt land that now stands to be developed through consortiums with senior executives from Greenpark Group — run by the Baldassarra family, whose members, companies and senior staff donated \$94,000 to the Tories — and Fieldgate Homes and its affiliates, whose principals and their companies gave nearly \$73,000.

Several of the developers are also connected to the Progressive Conservatives through former Tory officials and politicians now working as registered lobbyists.

In the last four years, TACC has hired three lobbyists with ties to Ford's party to speak to the government on its behalf on land use issues. One is former federal Conservative MP Peter Van Loan, who was once the president of Ontario's PC Party.

He sought, according to the province's lobbying registry, to influence "policies to facilitate the development of the client's lands" and "land use policy." In an email, Van Loan said those aims did not include asking for the removal of land from the Greenbelt.

TACC, in a consortium that included Greenpark Group, also hired Amir Remtulla — former chief of staff to the late Rob Ford, the premier's brother — from 2019 to 2020 to lobby on its behalf on issues related to "environment," "housing" and the redevelopment of an old power plant site.

A different consortium involving TACC and Greenpark Group hired lobbyist Celine Chang from 2018 to 2019 to speak to the government about "conservation," "environment," "housing" and a specific development in Mississauga. Soon after, Chang was in the premier's office as a policy adviser, a position she held from late 2019 until earlier this year. Earlier in her career, she worked briefly at the Ontario PC Party, according to her LinkedIn.

Remtulla and Chang did not respond to questions from The Star/Narwhal. Their lobbying registrations did not mention the Greenbelt.



Flato Developments, which bought about 100 acres of Greenbelt land in 2017 — some of which is part of the land swap proposal — hired lobbyist Leith Coghlin “to advise the government with respect to Planning Act and Municipal Act implications on development projects in Ontario” from October 2021 until October 2022. Coghlin once worked for former Progressive Conservative premier Mike Harris. Reached by phone, he declined to comment.

Fieldgate Properties also hired lobbyist Kailey Vokes of StrategyCorp to lobby the government about “housing” and developing surplus government land between August 2021 and August 2022. Before becoming a lobbyist, Vokes held a variety of roles in the Ford government, according to her LinkedIn profile. Vokes, who now works at Infrastructure Ontario, redirected questions to StrategyCorp, which said, via a spokesperson, that their lobbying for Fieldgate “had no relation to the Greenbelt.”

The province has expedited development for many of these same companies in the past.

FLATO, TACC and Rice Group have all previously benefited from Minister’s Zoning Orders (MZO), a controversial tool which allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to fast-track housing projects by overruling municipalities.

At least three of the parcels the province is now proposing to remove from the Greenbelt were near or part of projects that have received a zoning order in the past four years.

Silvio De Gasperis, owner of the TACC Group of construction and development companies, is also among the biggest potential winners of the province’s proposed changes to the Greenbelt. Through his companies and partnerships, he has land in four different areas proposed to be removed from the Greenbelt. Some are owned through holding companies, while others are held by consortiums of developers including De Gasperis.



Some of the most notable parcels held by De Gasperis are within the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, located east of Toronto in Pickering. The preserve protects prime farmland and sensitive waterways, abutting Rouge National Urban Park. If the province wants housing on the reserve, it will also have to repeal the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, which prohibits development in the area. As [reported in the Star](#) Wednesday, the government introduced a bill that would do so.

The area was, at one point, expropriated for a proposed airport that was never built. In 1999, the province worked with the City of Pickering to sell it back to the original landowners and tenant farmers, who agreed to conditions set by Pickering to leave it as green space in perpetuity. But six years later, Pickering suddenly revoked those conditions and developers — including De Gasperis — [snapped up land at bargain-basement prices](#).

“Everybody is always looking for a deal,” De Gasperis told The Star in 2005 after he bought the land.

The province stepped in, again, and added the land to the Greenbelt. De Gasperis sued the government in response, a pursuit that [cost him millions of dollars](#). But it had remained intact until now.

The Star/Narwhal analysis located 24 properties in the preserve owned by companies listing Silvio De Gasperis as a director. Purchased mostly in 2003 — with one lot added in 2004 and two in 2016 — for a combined \$8.6 million, the lands add up to more than 1,300 acres. All are slated to be removed from the Greenbelt.

“I never thought this would happen. We thought the preserve was cast in stone, because it has so many layers of protection,” said Bonnie Littley, one of the co-founders of the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition.



During Question Period in Ontario's Legislature on Thursday, after this article was published online, NDP MPP Jennifer French referenced the Star/Narwhal reporting, asking Clark, "Does the Premier understand how shady this looks?"

Clark said the land being opened up "will provide a significant opportunity for housing," and that the province is expanding the Greenbelt by adding 2,000 more acres than it's taking out.

The Greenbelt land swap also appears poised to benefit developers who made long-term bets.

New Horizon Development Group purchased land in Grimsby, east of Hamilton, through an associated company in 2019, spending \$10 million on a parcel of Greenbelt land next to Lake Ontario that was set aside for farming. The company's president, Jeff Paikin, said in an interview it hasn't been farmed in at least six decades and borders a developed area.

"At the end of the day, it never belonged in (the Greenbelt), and so we took a very big risk in 2019 when we bought it on the assumption that at some level in the next 10 years, common sense would rule," said Paikin, the brother of Ontario broadcaster Steve Paikin. "And here we are, so it's a good day."

The company had already been in touch with the Town of Grimsby about the property before the Greenbelt announcement, though Paikin said it hadn't talked to the province. "There's not really a mechanism to do so, other than to sort of call and beg," he said. "And that's just not our style. We go through proper channels."

The company is now making its plans to start construction by Ontario's 2025 deadline.



The province's proposal may also resolve some long-contentious sections of the Greenbelt. Minotar Holdings Inc., helmed by Clay and Corey Leibel, paid \$7.5 million in 2003 for 210 acres in Markham, part of which was later added to the Greenbelt. The company subsequently sued the province, arguing its inclusion was a "mistake." The province defended its decision in court, arguing that the land was "of significant environmental value" and its inclusion is "consistent with the policy rationale" for the Greenbelt, according to [a summary of its statement of defence](#) contained in related court documents. A trial is scheduled for next year. Now some of that land — the exact size isn't specified in public documents — is slated to be pulled out. Neither Clay Leibel nor the company's lawyers responded to questions for this story.

The bigger concern now, environmental advocates and other critics say, is that the province's decision to cut into the Greenbelt will ultimately impact the long-term viability of the whole of the protected area.

Vaughan Councillor Marilyn Iafrate said she has received calls from developers who own land elsewhere in the Greenbelt looking for municipal support to open up their properties as well.

"This is not the end of it. This is the start," said Iafrate. "Every single landowner with Greenbelt land will start lobbying the government. And we will see more of this."

Editor's note — Nov. 17, 2022: This article has been updated to include comments from Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark and an exchange between Clark and NDP MPP Jennifer French during Thursday's Question Period.

With files from Robert Benzie and research assistance from Rick Sznajder, Astrid Lange and Jesse McLean

This article is a collaboration between the Toronto Star and [The Narwhal](#).



Noor Javed is a Toronto-based reporter for the Star covering city news with interest in 905 municipal politics. Follow her on Twitter: [@njaved](#)



Brendan Kennedy is a Toronto-based social justice reporter on the Star's investigations team. Follow him on Twitter: [@BKennedyStar](#)

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Toronto

Who are the GTA developers set to benefit from Ford government's Greenbelt land swap?

CBC Toronto analysis of property, corporate records reveals developers who own Greenbelt lands

[Ryan Patrick Jones](#), [Nicole Brockbank](#) · CBC News ·

Posted: Nov 11, 2022 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: November 28



The Ontario government announced a 30-day consultation last week on removing 2,832 hectares across 10 municipalities from the Greenbelt. (Friends of the Greenbelt)

[comments](#)



- **UPDATE** | CBC Toronto was able to identify [several more Greenbelt properties](#) linked to the De Gasperis family after this initial story was published.

Several well-established developers are among the owners of land the Ford government is proposing to open up for housing in the protected Greenbelt in the Greater Toronto Area, a CBC Toronto analysis of dozens of land registry and corporate records has found.

The Ontario government announced a 30-day consultation last week on removing approximately 2,995 hectares across 10 municipalities from the Greenbelt, which was created in 2005 to permanently protect agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands in the Greater Golden Horseshoe area from development.

Corporations run by the De Gasperis family, longtime builders based in Vaughan, Ont. north of Toronto, who founded Tacc Developments and Tacc Construction, own 32 properties in three locations within the Greenbelt the government is proposing to open up.

The list of landowners also includes a company run by Michael Rice, president and CEO of Rice Group, and one run by Shakir Rehmatullah, president of Flato Developments.

- [**The Ford government wants to open up the Greenbelt for housing. Here's what it's proposing**](#)
- [**Ford government's proposed changes to Greenbelt could spell trouble, environmental experts warn**](#)

The province said last Friday the move will facilitate the building of at least 50,000 homes and that the plan is to add more land elsewhere to the Greenbelt than is being taken out. The lands considered for removal were chosen because they have the potential for homes to be built in the near future and because they are adjacent to existing urban areas, the government of Premier Doug Ford said.

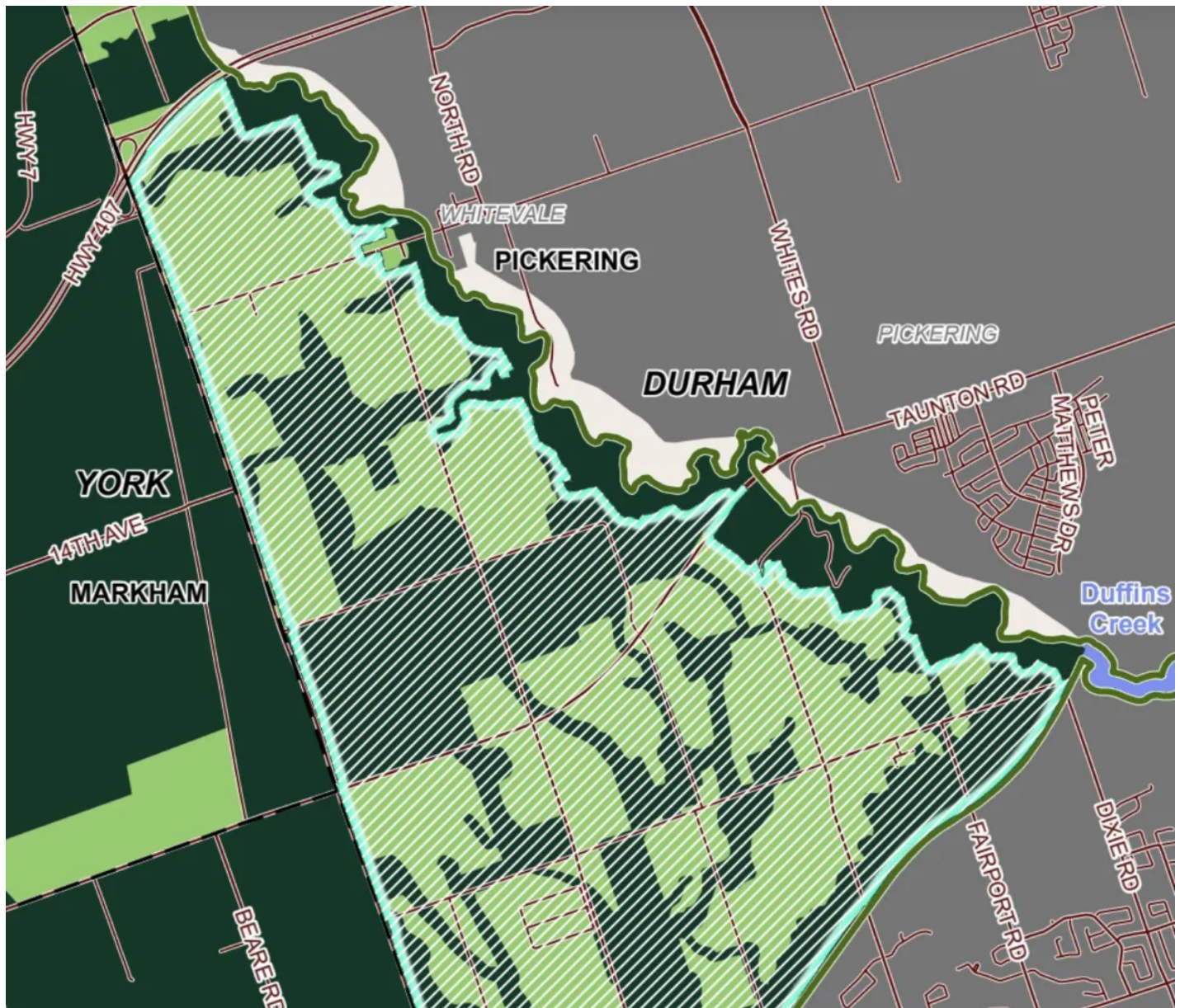
Here's what CBC News learned about some of the largest landowners who stand to benefit from the so-called Greenbelt land swap.

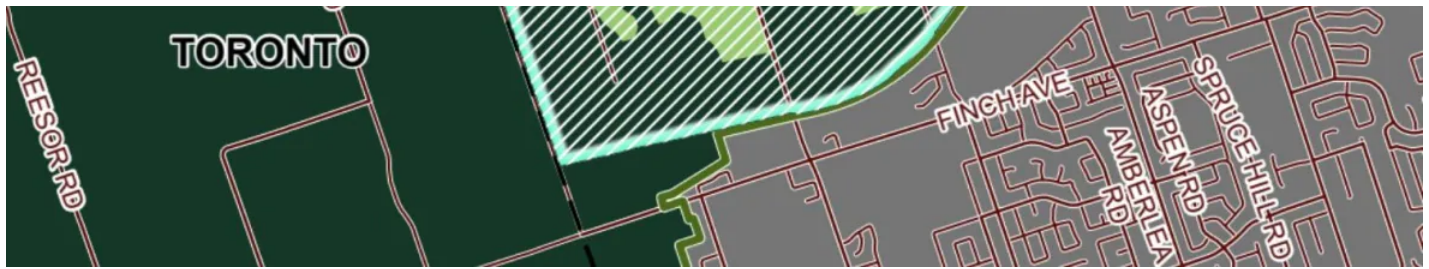
Pickering

The biggest parcel of land the province is proposing to open for development involves the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, which is made up of around 1,900 hectares of mostly farmland along Pickering's eastern town line, covering land from Highway 407 in the north, nearly all the way to Finch Avenue in the south.

CBC identified seven companies controlled by members of the De Gasperis family that own 28 properties covering 718 hectares of this part of the Greenbelt. The 28 lots were bought for more than \$21.5 million and all but four of the properties were purchased before the Greenbelt was created in 2005.

The four properties bought after the Greenbelt was created include two purchased together for \$1.7 million in 2016 and two others bought separately in 2020 for \$7.9 million and \$3.5 million.





Vaughan

A company run by the De Gasperis family also owns one of two tracts of land that intersect with the section of Greenbelt land potentially being taken out in Vaughan north of Teston Road and east of Pine Valley Drive.

Tacc Developments (Block 41) Inc. purchased one for \$50 million in May 2021. The 43-hectare property includes a mixture of Greenbelt and non-Greenbelt land, the latter of which makes up the larger portions.

Corporate records list Silvio De Gasperis, Michael De Gasperis and Carlo De Gasperis as officers of Tacc Developments (Block 41) Inc.

Tacc Developments is currently building a subdivision of low- and mid-rise housing along with other developers in the area on Block 41, one of Vaughan's last remaining greenfield areas located on 428 hectares of land bounded by Kirby Road to the north, Weston Road to the east, Teston Road to the south, and Pine Valley Drive to the west.

Richmond Hill

Another company linked to the De Gasperis family, Leslie Elgin Developments Inc., owns three parcels of land that contain Greenbelt land being considered for removal in Richmond Hill.

Leslie Elgin Developments purchased two of the lots together for \$37 million in August 2010, the records show. CBC Toronto was unable to obtain the sales history for the third, although the company did receive a \$200-million mortgage for the property in 2017.

King Township

Green Lane Bathurst GP Inc. is the sole owner of the Greenbelt land proposed for removal from King Township. The land fits within two of the company's other properties, which together

take up 276 hectares.

The company, which lists Michael Rice as its president, purchased five parcels of land in total in a group sale two months ago on Sept. 15 for \$80 million.



The Greenbelt was created in 2005 to permanently protect agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands in the Greater Golden Horseshoe area from development. (Submitted by the Greenbelt Foundation)

Rice is also CEO of the Markham-based Rice Group, a developer of retail, industrial and infrastructure projects.

While removing this land from the Greenbelt would open it up for housing development, the Township of King's council earlier this week passed a resolution supporting it as the location of a new Southlake Regional Health Centre site, and asked the province to fast track its development.

The resolution stated the landowner was willing to provide the land for the hospital site for a "nominal fee."

Stouffville

The province is proposing to remove two parts of the Greenbelt in Stouffville. They intersect with land owned by three companies.

Toronto-based Torca II Inc., whose president is Marcelo Perez-Hassaf, purchased more than 29 hectares at 12045 McCowan Road for \$25 million in September of 2020.

A numbered company that lists the same directors as Torca II Inc. purchased 11861 McCowan Road in April 2020 for \$12.5 million.

Documents accessed through the York Region council link Torca to Orca Equity Ltd., a company involved in the planning, development and financing of residential, commercial and industrial projects throughout Ontario, according to its website.

WATCH / What Ford has said about the Greenbelt:



Here's what Doug Ford has said over the years about developing Ontario's Greenbelt

27 days ago | 0:40

From pledging to never build on it in 2018 to saying it's part of the solution to Ontario's housing crisis in 2022, here's how the premier's position on the controversial issue has changed.

Another numbered company — 2502536 Ontario Limited — owns the third piece of land. Corporate documents list its president as Weixiang Wang.

Wang is also the chair of Wyview Group, a Markham-based developer that works on residential and industrial projects.

Markham

Six parts of the Greenbelt in Markham are on the chopping block.

Highway 48

Wang is also president of three numbered companies that own land at three addresses on Highway 48 with Greenbelt land the province is proposing to open for development.

In 2021, the three companies acquired the properties for a total of more than \$80 million.

19th Avenue

Flato Upper Markham Village Inc. owns a triangular parcel of land that could be removed from the Greenbelt at the northeast corner of 19th Avenue and McCowan Road. Shakir Rehmatullah, who founded Flato Developments Inc. in 2005, is the company's president.

Flato Upper Markham Village bought the land on the border between Markham and Stouffville in 2017 for \$15 million. The developer is building a subdivision in the area that will include a mix of single-family homes and an apartment building, according to Markham city council documents.

Kennedy Road

Minotar Holdings owns a parcel of land at 10379 Kennedy Road that includes part of the Greenbelt.

The company purchased it in 2003 for \$7.5 million. Its officers include Clayton and Corey Leibel, who are also associated with Forest Bay Homes Ltd.

Clarington

Nash Road Developments Inc. is the sole owner of the land slated for removal from the Greenbelt in Clarington. Its president is Peter Tanenbaum.

The company has owned 34 hectares at the northeast corner of Nash Road and Hancock Road in Courtice since 2003 when it purchased it for \$2.75 million.

The area is the site of several new proposed subdivisions made up of single family, detached homes and medium density residential buildings.

Ajax

A numbered company based in Richmond Hill owns the land the province is proposing to remove from the Greenbelt in Ajax — a 42-hectare farm that was designated as having cultural heritage value last year.

The company purchased the Nicholas Austin property at 775 Kingston Rd. East in June 2018 for \$15.8 million. Most of the property is currently part of the Greenbelt.

The company's main officer is Yuchen Lu, whose address is listed in Fuyang, China.

Here is the full Ontario government proposal to cut Greenbelt land and open it for development:

[Mobile users: View the document](#)

[\(PDF KB\)](#)

[\(Text KB\)](#)

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If you have any information about this story, or any other issue you'd like CBC Toronto to investigate, contact us at torontotips@cbc.ca

Corrections

- A previous version of this story incorrectly stated the total number of hectares the province is proposing to remove from the Greenbelt.

Nov 11, 2022 11:12 AM ET



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The property runs from Bathurst Street all the way to Dufferin Street, south of Miller's Sideroad.

Property taxes (2021) \$30,072.19

Toronto

Housing, a hospital or both? Councillors in GTA township raise concerns about future of Greenbelt land

Developer who recently paid \$80M for King Township land willing to provide some for hospital expansion

[Ryan Patrick Jones](#) · CBC News · Posted: Dec 02, 2022 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: December 2



An image taken from a drone shows an area of protected farmland in the Township of King, approximately a 45 minute drive north of Toronto. The province is proposing to open up this area of the Greenbelt and an adjacent area of the Oak Ridges Moraine for housing. The local council says it would rather see a new hospital there. (Yan Theoret/CBC)

[comments](#)

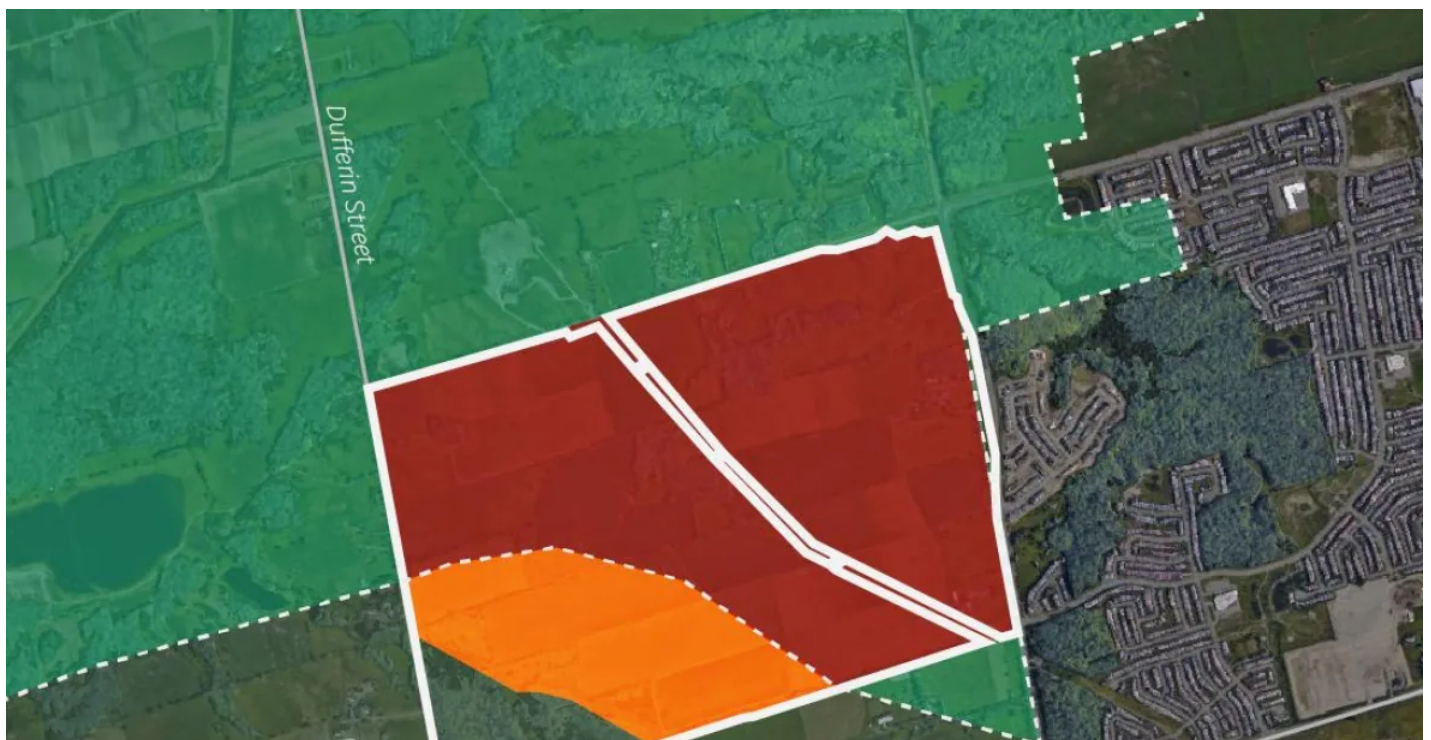
Elected officials in a Greater Toronto Area township worry a possible deal that could see a developer donate Greenbelt land for a new hospital will also lead to unwanted residential development in the same area.

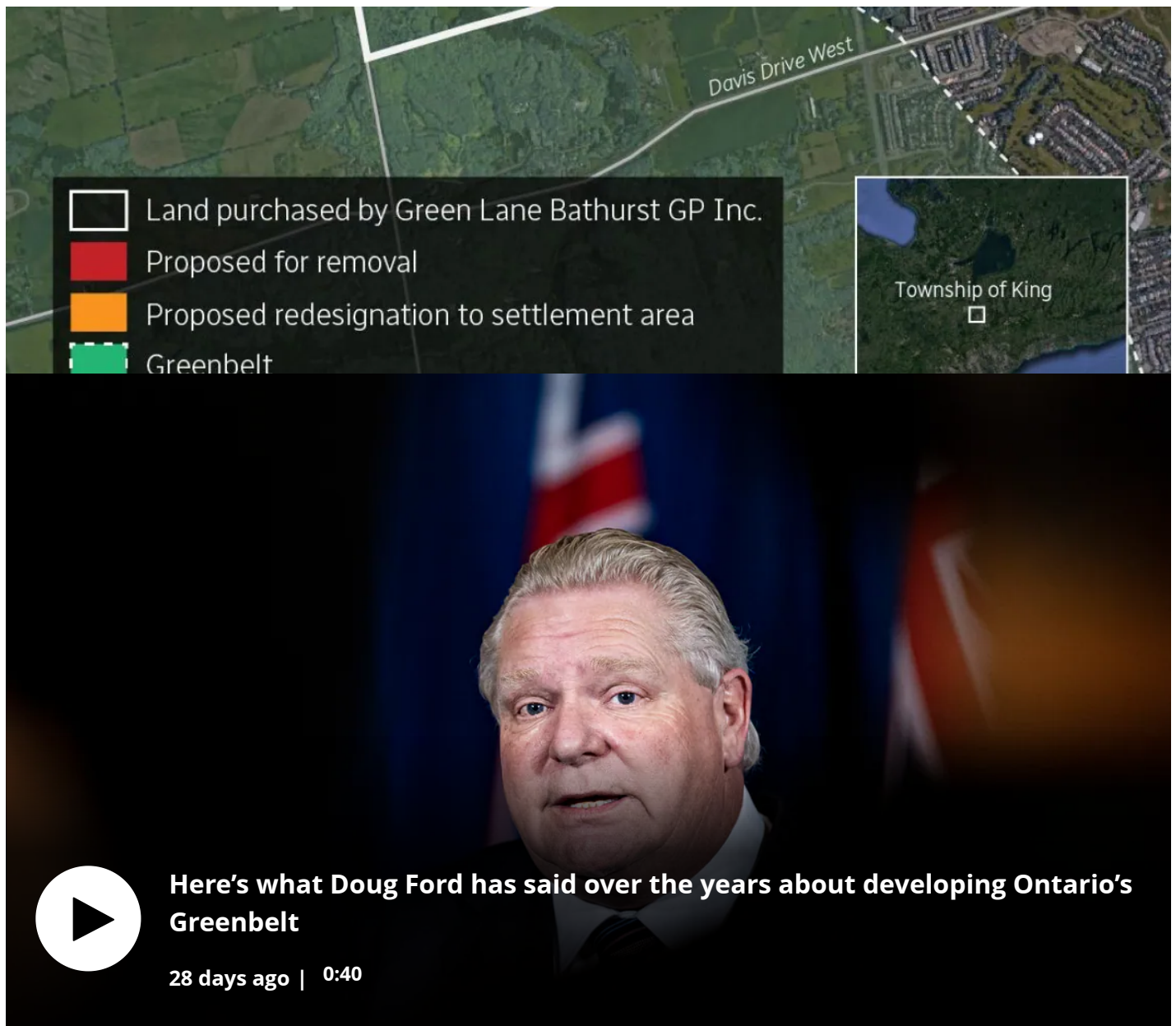
As part of its recent [proposal to open up sections of protected land](#) for housing, the province is planning to carve out a parcel from the Greenbelt in the Township of King and redesignate an adjacent area of the Oak Ridges Moraine from agricultural to "settlement area." Doing so would open up both areas, located about 50 kilometres north of Toronto, for development.

King's council unanimously opposed the zoning change and voted to push the province to use the Greenbelt area for a planned expansion of Newmarket's Southlake Regional Health Centre. That resolution stated that the landowner would provide the necessary land for the hospital site for a "nominal fee."

- [Ontario wants to cut Greenbelt land to build homes, contradicting prior pledge](#)
- [Who are the GTA developers set to benefit from Ford government's Greenbelt land swap?](#)

But two of the seven councillors are concerned they will end up with not just a hospital, but also a subdivision they don't want. Their unease shows how some local leaders feel trampled by the Ford government's recent push to meet its goal of building 1.5 million new homes by 2031.





From pledging to never build on it in 2018 to saying it's part of the solution to Ontario's housing crisis in 2022, here's how the premier's position on the controversial issue has changed.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said the farmland is likely to be lost to urban sprawl.

"The property owner has recently bought this property for \$80 million and so it's not going to sit there and be farmland," she said. "I've read nothing to suggest that he would be that kind of philanthropist to say that we're going to have the most expensive farmland in the world."

Records show the landowner paid \$80 million for 278 hectares of farmland in the Greenbelt a little more than a month before the housing minister announced it would be opened for development.



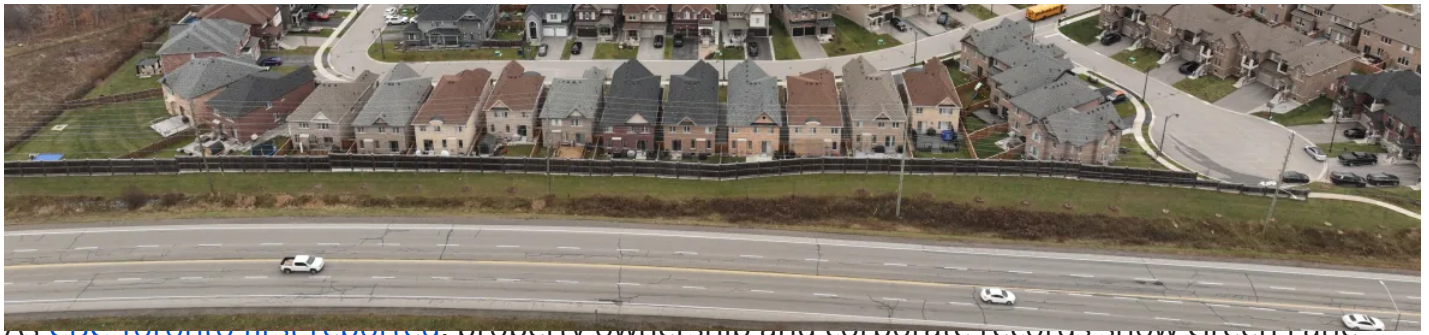
"We would ideally be as close to this site as possible for logistics and what's best for patients."

- [**Wealthy Ontario developer close to winning long battle to build homes on protected Greenbelt**](#)
- [**Coalition condemns Ford government's move to open Greenbelt lands for housing**](#)

The land in King is located on a vast expanse of farmland across from a Newmarket subdivision. It includes areas designated as "protected countryside" and "natural heritage system," two of the highest levels of Greenbelt protection.

Under current provincial regulations, building a hospital on such lands would be permitted and not require any rezoning.





As [CBC Toronto first reported](#), property ownership and corporate records show Green Lane Bathurst GP Inc. paid \$80 million for five parcels of land there on Sept. 15 this year. The company, which was incorporated in July, lists Michael Rice as its director.

Rice is also president and CEO of Rice Group, a Markham-based retail, industrial and infrastructure developer. Rice Group is currently involved in several projects in York Region, including a residential subdivision and Loblaw distribution centre in East Gwillimbury and a Costco warehouse in Newmarket.

- [**Does Ford's Greenbelt plan break ethics rules? Ontario's integrity commissioner asked to investigate**](#)
- [**Some developers win big after province expands urban boundary**](#)

A person with the name Michael Rice has donated more than \$10,000 to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario since 2018, according to Elections Ontario data, including a \$946 donation made in 2020 to Housing Minister Steve Clark's riding association.

The same person has also donated a smaller amount to the Ontario Liberal Party.

CBC-Radio Canada reached out to Rice Group to ask about its plans for the land, but the company didn't respond to an interview request and a list of questions.





"We've spent two-and-a-half years with public consultation, workshops, public meetings, making sure that our community in King Township is developed and built the way our residents want it, not the way somebody in Queens Park thinks it should be," said Eek.

WATCH | Province's housing plan for Greenbelt slammed:



A coalition of 200 groups and individuals has penned a letter calling out the Ontario government for its plans to have tens of thousands of homes located in the province's Greenbelt, a swath of protected green space and farmland.

No conditions on land donation: mayor

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini said the location is ideal for the hospital expansion because it borders Newmarket, and is therefore close to both rapid transit and municipal servicing such as sewer and water infrastructure.

"It caught us a little off guard, but I'm gonna take the opportunity to ... say here's an opportunity to get a new Southlake second campus and let's work hard to do that."

Pellegrini wouldn't provide details about any discussions between town staff and the developer, but said the offer to donate the land was made without conditions attached.



King Mayor Steve Pellegrini says the developer's offer of land for the hospital comes with no conditions attached. He says he isn't aware of any immediate plans to build housing. (Hugo Levesque/CBC)

The mayor said he isn't aware of any plans to build homes just yet, but a new hospital could require other facilities such as an X-ray clinic, doctor's offices and a parking lot.

"We haven't seen a site plan application or anything," said Pellegrini.

- [**Prominent developer family linked to more Greenbelt properties slated for housing**](#)
- [**Ontario passes housing bill amid criticism from cities, conservation authorities**](#)

In its Greenbelt proposal, the province said it wants to see significant progress on approvals by next year, with construction to begin in 2025, or the areas will be returned to the Greenbelt.

Steed, the hospital vice-president, said it would take at least 10 years to build the new hospital.

In a statement, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing said it had received the King council's request to build the hospital, but reiterated that opening up sections of the Greenbelt would lead to the construction of 50,000 homes.

With files from Radio Canada's Katherine Brulotte

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Greenbelt lands for Southlake site bought for \$80M in September



[Joseph Quigley](#)
Nov 18, 2022 1:00 PM
Updated Nov 18, 2022 3:34 PM



The map outlines the Greenbelt land west of Newmarket, on which a portion would be used for a new Southlake Regional Health Centre site. | Supplied photo

[Listen to this article](#)
00:04:06

The Greenbelt land that the Ontario government is proposing to open for development west of Newmarket was purchased by a company that incorporated and purchased the land for \$80 million just last summer.

Records show that Greenlane Bathurst GP Inc. is the owner of the land located west of Bathurst Street and south of Miller's Sideroad in King Township — land currently designated Greenbelt that the province now wants to open for development. The firm was incorporated July 19, 2022 and records show it transferred \$80 million to Schickedanz Bros Limited to purchase the land Sept. 15.

King council is pushing for the province to fast-track the land as a potential site for a new Southlake Regional Health Centre campus. Mayor Steve Pellegrini said it is land they have eyed for some time, but the hospital site would only take a small portion of the more than 500 acres of the property.

King has said the owner is willing to donate the land for the hospital for a nominal fee of about \$5.

"The hospital would need, I would say, less than 50 acres. There are supporting services, too," Pellegrini said. "We understand that there's more to it than just a hospital."

The King resolution does not oppose the opening up of the Greenbelt lands, which the province seeks to redesignate for settlement to open the door to development of needed housing. But [it does ask the provincial government to back off designating the Oak Ridges Moraine land that is included as part of the proposal](#), which King has said is unnecessary.

Corporate records show Michael Rice as the director of Green Lane Bathurst GP Inc. He is also the vice-president of Markham-based developer Rice Group, which has numerous projects in York Region, including the [retail complex at Highway 404 and Davis Drive](#) where the new Costco warehouse is to be located. NewmarketToday did not receive a response for a request for comment from Rice Group.

The provincial proposal includes opening 7,400 acres for housing development, which must begin construction by 2025. The impacted lands are located throughout the province, including in King, Markham and Vaughan. In exchange, the government has proposed adding 9,400 acres to the Greenbelt, including 13 urban river valleys.

[The Greenbelt expansion has garnered concern from environmentalists](#) and some municipal governments, concerned about the precedent and loss of protected green space.

"The government's plans would utterly destroy the certainty of permanent protection that is vital to the functioning of the Greenbelt as a whole," advocacy group Environmental Defence said. "It will also start a never-ending queue of Greenbelt land speculators at the minister's door, each with their own convenient rationalization for paving their own patch of Greenbelt."

The Ontario Home Builders' Association and its GTA counterpart, the Building Industry and Land Development Association, told NewmarketToday the housing crisis should be at the forefront of the Greenbelt conversation.

"We are in the midst of a housing crisis in the GTA. When the Greenbelt was created, its boundaries encompassed not just environmentally sensitive lands but also farmland and land that had previously been designated for growth for housing and employment spaces. The lands being removed from the Greenbelt are close to, and in some cases adjacent to, existing developments and servicing," the organizations said.

"Sensationalizing this matter by focusing on anything other than the outcome, the building of more homes to meet increasing demand due to population growth will be a disservice to readers and residents."

Although King is now backing the incursion into the Greenbelt for a potential hospital site, Pellegrini said last week that the province did not consult them about the move.

"This has happened, and we're jumping to get the best we can for King."

[Public comment on the province's Greenbelt changes is open till Dec. 4.](#)

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About the Author: Joseph Quigley

Joseph is the municipal reporter for NewmarketToday.
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By Ted McIntyre

Incoming OHBA President Bob Schickedanz checks all the boxes

On the list of things Bob Schickedanz likes to do, talking about himself is right up there with shoving bamboo shoots up his fingernails. Seated for a lunch interview at Toronto's Airport Keg, the 61-year-old partner at [FarSight Homes](#) is decidedly uncomfortable recounting his lifetime of accomplishments, and almost apologetic for what he deems as an uneventful personal bio.

Indeed, Bob Schickedanz has climbed no mountains nor cheated death during some exotic adventure. But do not mistake the absence of a spicy past for a full and flavourful life.

Founded in 2000 by brother Rick, [FarSight Homes](#), which Bob runs alongside Rick and his sons Johnathan and David, has flourished from a foundation of more than 35 years of fruitful home building experience. But the family business may have actually had its genesis 75 years ago in the Lithuanian town of Kurdikos Naumiensis. Situated in the previously German province of East Prussia, Neustadt Schirwindt had the historical misfortune of lying along the Russian border. Devastated and then rebuilt after World War I, residents of the rural community in 1944 knew it was only a matter of time before Russian troops laid waste to the region once again. Those locals included a teenaged Daniel Schickedanz—Bob's father.



"Dad's family were farmers that also bred and raised horses," Bob notes. "They were a tight-knit group that included his extended family.]

"The community knew the war wasn't going to end well, so there was a mass migration westward to avoid being captured by the Russians," Bob Schickedanz relates. "They packed up whatever belongings they could and loaded them onto five or six horse-drawn wagons."

Crossing the country, the Schickedanz clan settled in Southern Germany near Stuttgart. "After the war, dad and his cousins apprenticed in their chosen trades—carpentry, stonemasons. They were rebuilding the country to keep people occupied and create employment," Bob says. But optimism was tainted by the death of Daniel's father, who succumbed to kidney disease in the war's aftermath.

"My dad and some of his cousins decided they wanted to immigrate to North America to start a new life," Bob relates. "Through the Lutheran Church, he was able to secure sponsorship in 1950. His first experience here was on a farm in New Hamburg in the Kitchener area, working for room and board. He made \$50 a month until he could repay his passage and that of my mom, who joined my dad a year later to be married here in Canada."

Daniel was joined on this side of the Atlantic by three cousins: Gustav, Kurt and Gerhard. The team soon found themselves working for a general contractor in 1951, "building a beautiful custom-built house on the Credit River near [Mississauga Golf and Country Club](#) for a gentleman who published law journals," Bob notes. "There was a big dispute and the owner fired the general contractor. He asked the brothers, 'Can you finish this project?' They huddled up and said, 'Ya, we can do this.' And that was the start of Schickedanz Brothers Ltd.—three brothers and their cousin, my dad. They were always referred to as 'the brothers,' though, because they were so close and grew up together.

"From there they built a few custom homes in Oakville, mainly for executives working for the Ford Motor Company. Then they focused on the Toronto area, purchasing a number of building lots, and chipped away at it slowly until their first subdivision, when they purchased a small parcel of land in Chipping Park in the Lawrence and Don Mills Rd. area in the late 1950s. It grew organically from there."

Today, the Schickedanz family's various arms embrace construction, real estate development, home building and rental units in Southern Ontario, Alberta, B.C., Atlanta, Georgia and Florida, with deliveries of thousands of homes, thousands more lots to other builders, assisted living communities and the construction and management of shopping centres and office buildings. But with the

June passing of [Gustav Schickedanz](#)—who actually became one of Canada’s most successful horse breeders and owners—only one of the founding four remains: Bob’s father, Daniel.

Framing the Future

Although Bob’s early memories of the family business included his parents’ uninspiring Sunday afternoon drives through new neighbourhoods—“Us kids in the backseat didn’t think peeking out the window at new homes was so cool; we would rather have been outdoors”—he was bitten by the bug at the age of 16.



“My dad and uncles came to my cousins and me and said, ‘You boys should really learn what this building business is all about,’” Bob Schickedanz recalls. “They had a subdivision in Newmarket and decided they’d have us frame houses. None of us had any real carpentry skills. Nonetheless, they gave us a project to work on alongside one of their crews.

“We referred to ourselves as ‘Schickedanz Bros. Juniors,’” Bob grins. “They paid like \$2 a square foot. So if it was a 1,000 sq. ft. house, that was \$2,000! We thought we’d died and gone to heaven. But that was before we realized what hard work it was. This was before the days of forklift trucks bringing everything close to the site and lifting roof trusses up. It was all by hand, including hand-nailing.

“That was my first indoctrination into the business and it still resonates with me today,” Bob Schickedanz says. “Not so much because of the hard work, but what we learned—the organization and thought process that goes into it so that you don’t have three guys standing around while one guy is working. Or if you didn’t put the floor joists in the right spot, the plumber comes along and says, ‘The toilet’s supposed to go here—you’re gonna have to move that.’

“It was invaluable experience. Looking back, going through engineering school and things like advanced calculus—I wouldn’t know how to do that now without going back through the textbooks. But I can still frame a house...if my back holds up.”

Certainly his character has never wilted. Wally Schickedanz, a managing partner with brother Garry of Schickedanz’s Florida operation, recounts a story that typifies Bob’s professionalism. “We’re working on a rooftop in Newmarket on a sweltering summer day. Bob was maybe 18. Here we are—four kids—and the temperature hits something like 104F.



A family boat ride on Georgian Bay.

Crew after crew begin disappearing. One roofer gives up and jumps into a barrel of water. But Bob didn’t leave until we had that roof done. We were the last guys off the job.”

With three summers of framing in the rearview mirror, Schickedanz—a self-professed “quiet nerd” at A. Y. Jackson High School in North York—completed a Civil Engineering degree at the University of Toronto. “I had no expectation of automatically going into the family business; I wanted to go into engineering, to be a builder-designer,” he says. “I took a job at Marshall Macklin Monaghan Group for two years as structural engineer.



Clowning around with sister Gabriele.

“At the same time, the family business was expanding to new horizons, including Florida. An opening was available and I was asked to join under the umbrella of planning development acquisitions, approvals, site servicing—trying to get everything ready for the building end to take over.

“I was only 24 and was really blessed to have that opportunity. But there were also high expectations and a steep learning curve. I quickly appreciated how complex this industry is—how it’s a multi-year process, and about building relationships with various stakeholders, including municipalities, provincial and national government jurisdictions and agencies. There’s a lot of moving parts, and it’s not for the faint-hearted when you consider the financial risk.”

The Negotiator

As he orders his second iced tea, and with the subject having shifted from discussing himself to the art of negotiation and industry issues, Schickedanz is now in his comfort zone. So adept is he in this realm that you'd swear he could invite the most ardent of Conservatives and Liberals to Thanksgiving dinner and have them all stumble home together arm in arm.

"Rather than say a policy is no good and have nothing to offer, we have to be prepared to offer realistic solutions—not just say we don't want this, and then go away," he stresses. "I think it's important to always put oneself in the other person's shoes and try to achieve a reasonable and fair outcome. At times it's frustrating, but I've always been a strong believer in opening up the dialogue and keeping it going. I use a phrase a lot when I'm out in the industry, especially when talking to municipal or provincial counterparts: 'At the end of the day, we're all in this boat together.' I can't get something done on my own. There's a process to go through—but what is the end result and how can we get there? And if we make any changes in the process, will that help achieve results in a meaningful way—is it going to get those results sooner, or will it delay the result? The result is the important thing."

Schickedanz has no shortage of respecting peers. "He is whip-smart and doggedly determined," notes cousin Wally. "On the political side, one of his jobs will be to be an advocate for the industry. One of the things it takes to be successful there is knowing the rules, laws, by-laws, statutes, ordinances and guidelines better than the folks you're dealing with. That's Bob. He is always brutally prepared."

"He's thorough and analytical—I mean, he did become an engineer!" notes cousin Fred Schickedanz, who has overseen [Schickedanz West](#) since that offshoot of [Schickedanz Bros. Ltd.](#) was established in Calgary in 1979. "Bob is a bridge-builder—not an antagonistic, my-way-or-the-highway sort of guy. He's looking to build alliances and partnerships. He's very well researched and he knows his stuff—and not just in his own backyard."



Preparing for camping trip with brother Rick.



FarSight Homes team – Bob, Jonathan and Rick Schickedanz, David Schickedanze and Kevin Jollow celebrating their 2018 AoD win for Best New Home Kitchen.

"Perfection is the first word that comes to mind," exclaims Rick Milne, longtime mayor of New Tecumseth in Simcoe County, who has known Schickedanz for more than 25 years. "His company's product is fantastic—I don't think I've ever heard a complaint about any of the houses he's sold. And he's always a gentleman. In any business there's a percentage of people who want to push things through, but Bob knows there's no use in coming to the municipality if he doesn't have all the boxes checkmarked. He doesn't expect you to bend over—just do what you're supposed to do, and he does what he's supposed to do. And that's why we have a great working relationship."

And don't burn bridges, Schickedanz cautions. "I'm a long-term thinker. Others sometimes take a different approach. Any business has to be profitable, but sometimes you can't milk every nickel out of a project. That doesn't necessarily result in the best outcome."

The Agenda

As Schickedanz assumes the presidential reins, expect him to keep a keen eye on the political process. “My father is 90 now and he still goes to work as often as he can,” Bob notes. “He likes to go through a rundown on the status of various projects, and I find myself repeating: ‘Well, we’re still waiting for this or that.’ Dad’s common response is, ‘What’s taking so long?!’ For example, in the 1960s, there was a post-war construction boom in North York, and it wouldn’t be uncommon for my father or uncles to go in the morning to drop off building permit applications then come back late in the day to pick up the permits. It begs the question, ‘So what has changed so much between then and now? Have the delays and additional oversight created more value and protections that didn’t exist at that point in time? If we’re not achieving something better in the end, what is all this extra time and effort doing other than adding more costs to the homeowner at the end of the day?’

“We’ve been touting for a while now to policymakers that we have to get to a point where you create more certainty in the industry in terms of timing and costs. We need to address affordable housing in a meaningful way without creating more uncertainty—where individuals and companies can get into the business and know when they can produce a product and how much it’s going to cost them. With so many unknowns right now, things drag on and costs keep piling it up. It makes it more difficult to create a meaningful supply pipeline of housing for consumers.” Bob Schickedanz is pleased with the number of consultations OHBA has had with the new regime at Queen’s Park in terms of its concerns. “Dramatic proof of that is the recent passing of Bill 108—aimed at creating more housing supply. The key to creating affordability is having supply and choice for people,” he says. “But the devil is in the details. Whatever the rules, regulations, policies—it’s important that they get implemented right down the chain and bear real results. If there’s resistance to implement it at the local level, for example, we won’t create more supply in the end.

“I think it’s our duty to make sure we engage as many stakeholders as possible—towns, municipalities, regional governments, conservation authorities, regulatory groups—to find a proper path and solution, because being at loggerheads and imposing more regulation hasn’t worked.

“Admittedly, our industry has a pause in the marketplace right now,” Schickedanz continues. “But the underlying fact is that supply is still really tight. And by using the government’s own statistics—and BILD has done some work on this—we figure in the next 10-12 years, we’ll need a million new housing units in this province. That’s a lot of supply to bring onto the market, and we’re already running short today in terms of that number, building in the upper 70,000s to 80,000 each year.”

Looking Ahead

As the FarSight name implies, Schickedanz is taking the long view of laying the groundwork. “I saw a study that indicated that the average time a project takes from the time you make an application until people move in ranges from 10-15 years. So to create those million homes in the next 10 years, those projects have to already be well advanced on the drawing board today. Everything we apply for today, unless things change dramatically, isn’t going to make the cut. If we don’t address this, we’re going to have a disaster on our hands.”

Bob Schickedanz is also painfully aware that the industry has no chance of achieving the required numbers if the shortage of trades isn’t further addressed. “The change to a 1-to-1 apprentice-to-journeyperson ratio is helpful,” he says, “but we need to do a much better job of informing the youth of this province of the opportunities in the trades. I think there are a lot of young individuals who don’t have a clue about the potential for a rewarding career, nor the money that’s in it, simply because they haven’t had the exposure. I feel very strongly that the education system has to pivot to make kids aware of it.

“I’m really concerned as a business owner, and I think a lot of our members are similarly concerned,” Schickedanz notes. “We need to collectively take action. We need a pipeline to supply our business, and things like that take a long time to develop. Just drive into a jobsite and look at the average age of the people working there!”

Motivating Factors



Posing with Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark and OHBA Past President Pierre Defresne

Bob Schickedanz salivates at a challenge, however. “Sometimes what resonates is overcoming a degree of adversity,” he says. “For the first FarSight project—2000-2001—the company became an investor in a development in Seagrave, north of Port Perry—110 homes. The developer at the time needed a backer, so we invested. But the builder went into default, and the initial developer had financial problems. It was a project that could potentially have been a disaster. We pivoted and took on the responsibility of finishing the development and building the remaining homes. Both Rick and I were on the tools every day—carpentry work, building decks, sweeping up after the trades—whatever it took. While it might not resonate as a successful project from an economic standpoint, we finished off a great community and the people were pleased.



Bike ride with wife, Claritta.

What continues to motivate Schickedanz today? “Two things,” he says. “The first is to be able to take a project from the cradle to fruition—however long it takes. Every time I look at properties, the first thing that tweaks in my mind is, ‘How can we make this work?’ The other thing is that I have two nephews in the business now—Johnathan and David. I call myself G2—Generation Two in the company. They’re G3, and it’s great to see someone passionate being involved. From that perspective, I’m really motivated to grow the business for the next generation.”

Family matters for Bob Schickedanz—a lot. Ask him about his favourite childhood memories and, one by one, he’ll recite various family gatherings. “It would be nothing to have a dozen or more cousins for birthday celebrations.”



The trend has continued, with their four daughters paying visits to Bob and Claritta’s retreat on Sweatman Island, a five-acre dot of land on Georgian Bay that Bob shares with brother Rick’s family, who have their own abode on the island’s western shore. “I don’t have many hobbies,” Bob says, “but I love going up there, puttering around, building projects, clearing and cutting trees. My kids say, ‘Dad only loves to go up there to work.’ But that’s my happy place—just a lazy, sunny summer day, doing a little swimming and maybe taking my grandkids for water sports behind the boat.”



Bob and Claritta’s cottage on
Sweatman Island

A splash in the lake. Staying in touch with cousins. Another firm handshake with municipal staff, a new friend made at an OHBA event, another award nomination for FarSight Homes.

They seem like simple pleasures. But were he to step back and take inventory of the sheer breadth and weight of those accomplishments, Bob Schickedanz might well discover that there is far more to his personal biography than he ever realized.

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Developers who bought Ontario Greenbelt land linked to Ford government

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TORONTO

PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 28, 2022



Ontario Premier Doug Ford on a construction site in Brampton on May 4.

CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Since Ontario Premier Doug Ford was first elected four years ago, developers have paid tens of millions of dollars for a number of properties that include protected lands the province is now proposing to carve out of the Greenbelt.

Among those properties is a substantial piece of land lying largely in the Greenbelt that sold for \$80-million in September, just weeks before the government revealed its new plan.

During the 2018 election campaign, Mr. Ford promised not to touch the Greenbelt – a vast arc of farmland, forests and wetlands across Southern Ontario. The pledge followed public uproar over a video that showed him saying he would allow housing development on a “big chunk” of the protected area. Again, in late 2020, he made a similar promise.

The Ford government reversed itself earlier this month, announcing plans to remove 7,400 acres from the Greenbelt for the construction of at least 50,000 new homes. At the same time, land elsewhere would be added to the Greenbelt that, the government says, would result in a net increase of 2,000 acres.

The proposal to open up the Greenbelt to development has sparked protest from environmentalists, agriculture advocates and land-use experts, who argue that swapping one piece for another may be ineffective, because land has different environmental values, and that this also paves the way for other developers to push for their properties to be removed from the Greenbelt.

The proposed carve-outs of 15 areas of land include at least nine properties that were bought by developers for \$10-million or more – transactions that topped \$300-million in total – since the Progressive Conservatives took office in 2018, property records show.

At least four developers who bought the properties the government is now proposing to remove from the Greenbelt have either donated to the PC Party, hired conservative lobbyists, or both.

The government defended the decision to open up parcels of Greenbelt land to development but did not address questions related to the developers.

“Ontario is in a housing-supply crisis, and our government is considering every possible option to get more homes built faster,” Victoria Podbielski, press secretary to Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Steve Clark, said by e-mail.

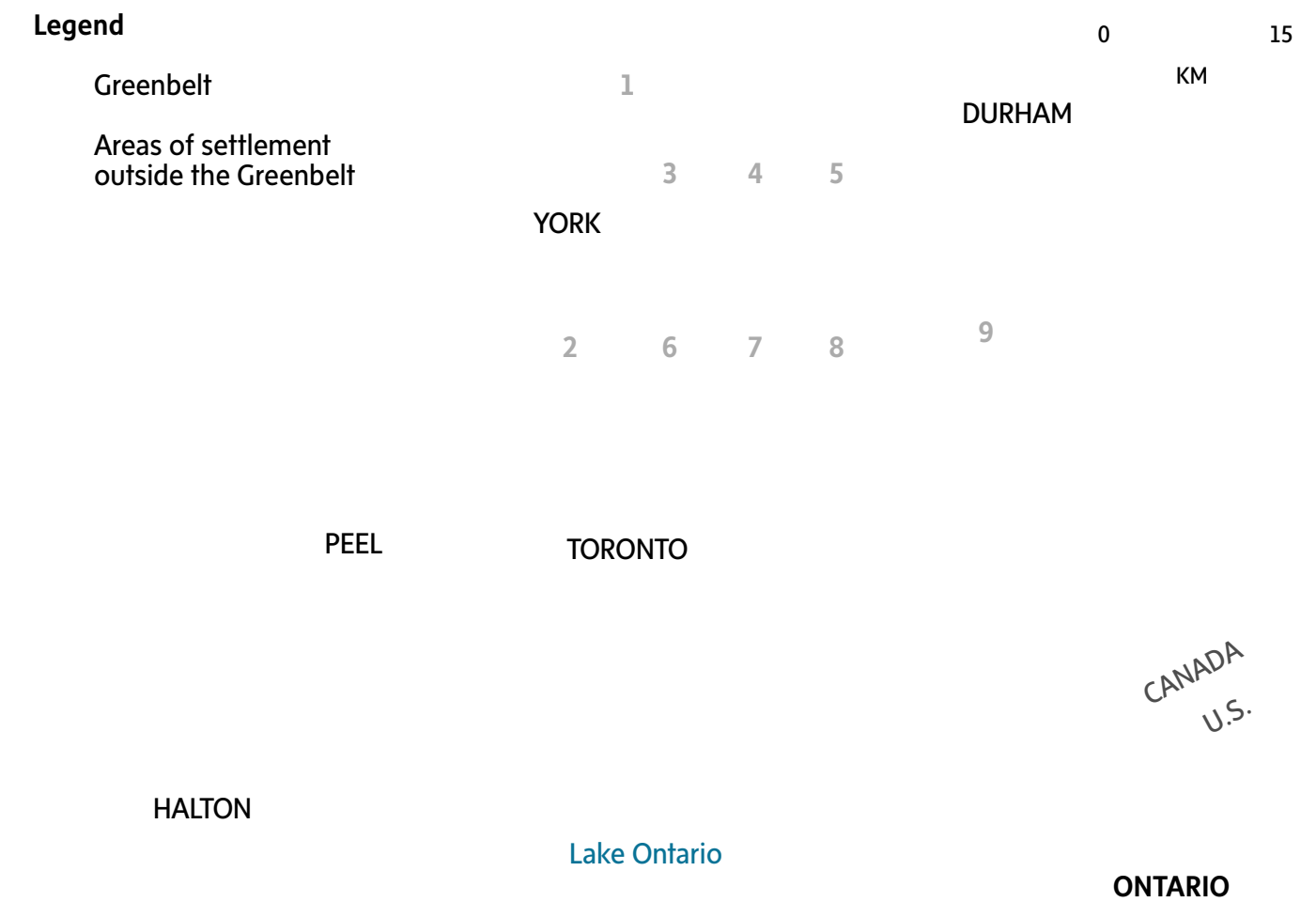
On Nov. 4, the province announced 30 days of consultation on removing these lands from the Greenbelt. The province says owners would have to make “significant progress” on development approvals by the end of next year and begin construction by 2025 or the government would “begin the process” of returning those properties to the Greenbelt.

Since the announcement, The Globe and Mail has been examining property and transaction data, as well as corporate records, of the pieces of land Queen’s Park is proposing to carve out of the Greenbelt.

The Globe looked most closely at six of the province’s 11 maps of Greenbelt carve-outs, which together included 19 properties that had sold since the late 1990s. Of those, six properties changed hands between the Greenbelt being created in 2005 and the Tories taking office in 2018. Another 10 have sold since the 2018 change of government. Nine of these were to developers and numbered companies, most for large amounts, and the remaining one did not involve a corporate buyer.

Greenbelt carve-outs

A partial list of lands subject to Greenbelt protections sold since the Progressive Conservatives took office in 2018



HAMILTON

10

Greenbelt

Detail

U.S.

NIAGARA

	LOCATION	DATE SOLD	SALE PRICE	BUYER
1	King Township – south of Miller’s Sideroad, east of Dufferin St and west of Bathurst St	Sept. 20, 2022	\$80.0M	Green Lane Bathurst GP Inc.
2	11011 Pine Valley Drive, Vaughan	May 20, 2021	\$50.0M	TACC Developments (Block 41) Inc.
3	11861 McCowan Road, Stouffville	April 20, 2020	\$12.5M	2743903 Ontario Inc.
4	12045 McCowan Road, Stouffville	Sept. 20, 2021	\$25.0M	TORCA I Inc.
5	12045 McCowan Road, Stouffville	Sept. 20, 2021	\$25.0M	TORCA II Inc.
6	10378 Highway 48, Markham	Dec. 20, 2021	\$60.0M	2714791 Ontario Ltd.
7	10235 Highway 48, Markham	Oct. 20, 2021	\$23.5M	2724265 Ontario Ltd.
8	10541 Highway 48, Markham	March 20, 2021	\$2	2724270 Ontario Ltd.
9	775 Kingston Road E, Ajax	June 20, 2018	\$15.8M	2615898 Ontario Inc.
10	502 Winston Road, Grimsby	May 20, 2019	\$10.0M	502 Winston Road Inc.

Note: Numbers 4 and 5 are two properties with the same address.

JOHN SOPINSKI AND MURAT YÜKSELIR/THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

The Greenbelt is about 2 million acres of protected land, established in 2005 by then-premier Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government, stretching across the Greater Toronto and Niagara areas. It was designed to protect farmland and environmental habitat while encouraging denser development by limiting suburban sprawl.

The plan for the greenbelt is part of a suite of recent announcements designed to accelerate home construction in a region with a housing-affordability crisis.

The Ford government has pledged to facilitate the construction of 1.5 million homes in Ontario over the next decade.

Mayors in Toronto and Ottawa have been given expanded authority, and could soon be able to pass bylaws with only one-third support on council. Conservation authorities have had their mandate reduced. And cities will no longer be able to levy development charges – which fund sewers, parks and other civic amenities – on certain kinds of housing.

Critics say that these measures undermine local democracy, threaten the environment and will deprive cash-strapped cities of hundreds of millions of dollars – without necessarily resulting in more homes being built.

Victor Doyle, a former provincial land-use expert considered the main architect of the Greenbelt, questioned why developers would have paid so much for land that was considered off-limits for development.

“It’s beyond belief,” said Mr. Doyle, who says the government’s plan will only encourage sprawl.

“It makes no sense to continue this massive outward growth, which the government has been pursuing with unbelievable vigour, undoing so much, and based on a big lie that we’re running out of land.”

Among the sales in the Greenbelt parcels up for potential development, the most recent occurred in mid-September, about six weeks before the government’s announcement.

On Sept. 15, a company controlled by developer Michael Rice bought the 280-hectare property in the Township of King for \$80-million. The real estate agent who sold the property promoted it as a “prime land-banking opportunity,” referring to the practice of holding undeveloped land for future opportunities.

The property had previously traded hands in 2000 – before the Greenbelt protections were put in place – for about \$9.3-million.

Mr. Rice did not respond to e-mails requesting comment.

Almost immediately after the government’s announcement, the local municipality threw its support behind allowing the land to be carved out of the Greenbelt so it could be used for a new hospital.

The local council passed a resolution just one business day later, saying the property owner is “committed to providing the necessary lands” for a new hospital “for a nominal fee.”

Township of King Mayor Steve Pellegrini said in a statement that “a discussion took place some time ago” with the property owner who “wanted to give back to the community by providing land” for a new Southlake Regional Health Centre site. Mr. Pellegrini said neither he nor representatives of the municipality discussed removing the 280-hectare property from the Greenbelt with the government.

The new hospital site requires up to 40 hectares, according to Southlake spokeswoman Lindsey Furlanic. She said officials will “evaluate this potential opportunity” after the province’s consultations.

Another high-value sale occurred in the spring of 2021, only five months after Mr. Ford’s most recent promise not to allow Greenbelt development. The property in Vaughan – which included protected land – sold for \$50-million.

The buyer was TACC Developments (Block 41) Inc., which is controlled by prominent developer Silvio De Gasperis and members of his family. The company borrowed \$100-million from CIBC to cover the purchase, at an interest rate of 21 per cent annually, records show.

Mr. De Gasperis, who owns multiple properties on the development list, did not respond to e-mails requesting comment.

One Greenbelt property changed hands after the 2018 election for only \$2, and was subsequently used as collateral to borrow \$15-million. Two sales included vendor take-back mortgages, in which the seller lends the buyer money for the purchase. One purchase was financed by a company that appears, based on its corporate profile, to be a wrecking yard.

Other buyers of these properties included a series of numbered companies, one named for the address of the land it bought and TORCA I Inc. and TORCA II Inc. The Globe reached out to executives or directors associated with all of these companies. All declined to comment or did not respond.

Two companies tied to Mr. De Gasperis hired former federal Conservative cabinet minister Peter Van Loan to lobby the Ford government about issues including land-use planning and development, according to Ontario's lobbyist registry. Mr. Van Loan said in an e-mail that he did not lobby the government about removing land from the Greenbelt on behalf of Mr. De Gasperis's companies.

Mr. De Gasperis is also a PC Party donor. Elections Ontario records show total donations of more than \$17,000 to the PC Party since 2018 under variations of Mr. De Gasperis's name. There were also donations to the Liberal Party under the same names.

As well, donors with the same names as several of Mr. De Gasperis's executives and family members have donated tens of thousands of dollars to the PC Party.

Mr. Rice's development company, Rice Group, hired Frank Klees, a former Ontario PC cabinet minister, between 2019-20 to lobby the government "on the economic development opportunities represented by a number of the client's emerging projects," the lobbyist registry says. The contract predated Mr. Rice's purchase of the land in King Township. Mr. Klees did not return an e-mail seeking comment.

In addition, provincial records also show that a person with the name Michael Rice has donated more than \$10,500 to the PC Party since 2018. This individual also donated money to the Liberals in 2018. As well, three donors with the same names as Rice Group executives have given the PC Party thousands of dollars since 2018.

Jack Gibbons, chair of the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance, questioned why the province is "sacrificing" the Greenbelt. "It just doesn't make any sense. The only people who will benefit from sacrificing Greenbelt lands are certain developers."

With research from Rick Cash

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About

I am a driven public relations professional with federal and provincial government expertise, and an extensive network in Queens Park and Parliament Hill, who possesses the ability to multitask in high-pressure situations with the utmost attention to detail.

I have the unique ability to utilize effective communication and networking techniques to promote brand awareness and governing initiatives and to strategically develop a course of action that will identify, capitalize on, or diminish any risk associated with a political issues or governing policy in both domestic and international environments.

Key Strengths: Government Relations | Strategic Networking | Stakeholder Relations | Policy



Experience



Chief Executive Officer

Ontario Home Builders' Association

Jun 2022 - Present · 7 months

Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Chief Of Staff

Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Jan 2021 - Apr 2022 · 1 year 4 months



Vice President, Government Relations and Public Policy

Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario (CPA Ontario)

Jun 2019 - Jan 2021 · 1 year 8 months

Toronto, Canada Area

Developed, maintained and engaged in effective, trusted working relationships with elected and non-elected government officials to support CPA Ontario's regulation of the accounting profession in the public interest.

Monitored legislation, regulations, and emerging issues, to keep CPA Ontario's leadership team informed of material developments or changes in the environment for the profession.

Developed multi-faceted strategies and campaigns to advance CPA Ontario's government...

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Chief Of Staff

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Dec 2018 - Jun 2019 · 7 months

Toronto, Canada Area



Developed and implemented a strategic plan to drive the government's mandate on behalf of the Premier and the Minister, in partnership with the government's key stakeholders.

Developed, maintained and engaged effective, trusted working relationships with Cabinet, elected officials, senior government staff and stakeholders to develop policy solutions that support the...

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Chief Of Staff

Ontario Ministry of Transportation

Jun 2018 - Dec 2018 · 7 months

Toronto

Responsible for the day-to-day management of Ministry business on behalf of the Minister and the Premier

Developed and implemented a strategic plan to drive the government's mandate on behalf of the Premier and the Minister, in partnership with the government's key stakeholders.

Developed, maintained and engaged effective, trusted working relationships with Cabinet, elected officials, senior government staff and stakeholders to develop policy solutions that support the...

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Senior External Relations Advisor

Hydro One

Sep 2017 - Jun 2018 · 10 months

Toronto

Responsible for the strategic development and execution of government engagement strategies, while developing strategies to ensure company-wide awareness of government and political activity.

Developed and executed the company's pre-election government engagement



Created and implemented an infrastructure for internal communications to highlight changes in government and political strategy, in...

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Senior Consultant

Hill+Knowlton Strategies

Jun 2016 - Aug 2017 · 1 year 3 months

Toronto, Canada

Responsible for the strategic development and execution of public affairs and communications strategies for a variety of clients across a broad spectrum of industries.

Provided in-depth policy analysis, including scrutiny of legislative, regulatory and political processes, in an effort to influence the decisions of government and community groups.

Developed community engagement strategies with the intent of building broad based coalitions to influence public opinion, and develop...

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Aug 2014 - Nov 2015 · 1 year 4 months

Ottawa, Canada Area

Responsible for the strategic planning, negotiation, logistical development, and execution of events pertaining to the Prime Minister of Canada's domestic and international schedule.

Established connections with partnering governments and private sector organizations, such as The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Vatican, Metrolinx, and the City of Toronto, in an effort to create productive and collaborative relationships between the Prime Ministers Office and its'...

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

1 year 11 months

Senior Policy Advisor and Issues Analyst for the Ontario PC Caucus

May 2014 - Aug 2014 · 4 months

Toronto, Canada Area

Worked alongside elected officials and stakeholders in an effort to research and develop post-election policy and legislative strategy, and to construct an official response to the Provincial Budget of 2014.

To accomplish this task, I led a team of legislative and political researchers toward the development of a stakeholder database, which established the foundation of a stakeholder outreach program that fostered relationships between stakeholders and their appropriate legislative...

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Sep 2013 - May 2014 · 9 months

Toronto

During my time as a Legislative advisor, I was responsible for the management, research, development, and execution of the strategy and logistics for 10 Legislative Committees and the overall legislative strategy of the Ontario PC Caucus

I worked with senior elected officials to ensure that legislative and communications strategies fell within the purview of the overall political strategy of the Ontario PC Caucus, and that these strategies reflected the concerns and ideas of our...

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Advance to the Leader of the Official Opposition at Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Oct 2012 - Sep 2013 · 1 year

Toronto, Canada Area

As the Leader's Advance, I was responsible for the strategic planning, development, and implementation of various events, conventions, fundraisers and press conferences on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition at Queens Park in a working environment conducive to tight guidelines while working under pressure.

I successfully managed and executed the public events schedule for the Leader of the Opposition through the utilization and development of effective oratory and interpersonal...

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Education

University of Waterloo

M.A · History

Specialization: The History of Canada's Foreign Policy with China



Volunteer Experience

Board of Governors

University of Waterloo

Apr 2020 - Present · 2 years 9 months

Education

Secretary/Treasurer

Public Affairs Association of Canada - Ontario Chapte

Jan 2020 - Present · 3 years

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Wealthy Ontario developer close to winning long battle to build homes on protected Greenbelt

Silvio De Gasperis of Tacc Group has long wanted to develop land in Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve

[Ryan Patrick Jones](#) · CBC News · Posted: Nov 22, 2022 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: November 25



Ontario developer Silvio De Gasperis first bought parcels of farmland near Pickering, Ont., in 2003, in what is now known as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. (Giuseppe Fiorino/CBC)

[comments](#)



- **UPDATE** | CBC Toronto was able to identify [several more Greenbelt properties](#) linked to the De Gasperis family after this initial story was published.

Almost 20 years after taking the province to court, attempting to embarrass a former premier and pushing to change local zoning rules, a prominent Ontario developer may now finally be set to cash in on his multi-million dollar gamble involving the Greenbelt.

In 2003, Silvio De Gasperis of the Tacc Group of companies started buying up parcels of cheap farmland in north Pickering, Ont., east of Toronto, with hopes of transforming them into lucrative housing subdivisions. Just two years later, those plans began to fall apart.

Much of the land the developer had purchased was located in what is now known as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP), and was protected by easements and a zoning order. In 2005, former premier Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government also included the preserve lands in what it called the Greenbelt — a vast 810,000-hectare area of farmland, forest and wetland stretching from Niagara Falls to Peterborough — marking it as off limits to development.

De Gasperis told the National Post in March 2005 that the province's move to include the DRAP in the Greenbelt would cost his company an estimated \$240 million in lost revenue.

"McGuinty has already hurt me," De Gasperis told the Toronto Star in 2006. "I'm going to hurt him."

De Gasperis then launched a campaign to stymie plans for the Greenbelt, working with Pickering to develop the preserve land anyway, and eventually took the province to court. His efforts failed and the agricultural land has remained protected, with De Gasperis unable to build new subdivisions as he originally planned.

But that could soon change thanks to the Ford government's [proposal to free up thousands of hectares of Greenbelt land](#) in 15 areas of the province, including the DRAP. This could pave the way for housing and millions in development profits for landowners, including De Gasperis.

- [Ontario wants to cut Greenbelt land to build homes, contradicting prior pledge](#)
- [The Ford government wants to open up the Greenbelt for housing. Here's what it's proposing](#)

Critics of the Ford government's plan are raising questions.

Victor Doyle, a former senior provincial planner who helped design the Greenbelt, said he felt "deceived as a planner and as a citizen," given that Premier Doug Ford and Housing Minister Steve Clark have both previously promised to [leave the Greenbelt alone](#).

"It's all about, in my view, rewarding the land development interests who own this land and are clearly of primary interest to the government," Doyle said.

WATCH / Here's what Doug Ford has said about developing Ontario's Greenbelt:



Here's what Doug Ford has said over the years about developing Ontario's Greenbelt

27 days ago | 0:40

From pledging to never build on it in 2018 to saying it's part of the solution to Ontario's housing crisis in 2022, here's how the premier's position on the controversial issue has changed.

Protecting the preserve

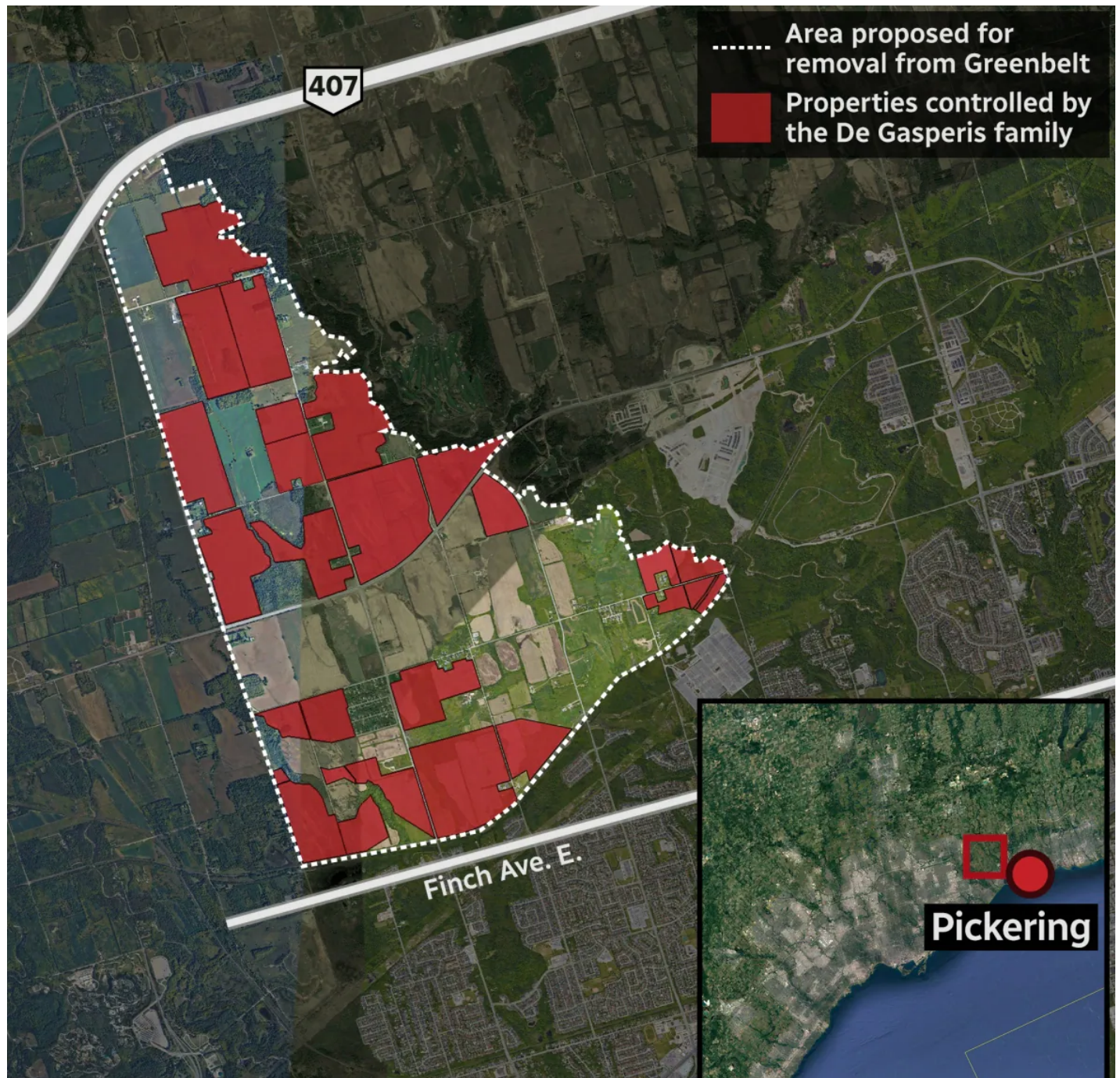
The DRAP contains around 2,000 hectares of prime agricultural land, according to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA).

The provincial government expropriated much of it in the 1970s ahead of construction of a planned Pickering airport nearby. When the airport didn't pan out, the government began

selling the land back to tenants and farmers in the late 1990s at a discount because easements placed on the land designated it for agricultural uses only in perpetuity.

Still, developers — including De Gasperis — began buying up parcels and working with the City of Pickering to obtain permission to build housing.

After the McGuinty government included the preserve in the Greenbelt in February 2005, the city tried to cancel some of the easements. In response, the province reinstated them by passing the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, which enshrined the agricultural status of the land in law.



own 28 properties within this area the Ontario government wants to remove from the Greenbelt in Pickering. (CBC News)

By then, De Gasparis had begun a campaign to embarrass the McGuinty government.

According to media reports, he leaked a letter containing details of an invite-only \$10,000-per-plate fundraising dinner McGuinty held with developers before the Greenbelt boundaries were drawn.

De Gasperis told media in 2006 that he had also spent at least \$5 million on a series of lawsuits against the Ontario government. The courts ruled against him, and the land has been protected ever since.

'We thought we were done'

Land in and around the DRAP in Pickering is the largest chunk of protected land that could be opened for development as part of the of the Ford government's proposed changes to the Greenbelt.

Further, last week the government unveiled a [bill that would repeal the legislation protecting the DRAP](#), which would remove barriers to housing development.

A [CBC Toronto analysis of property and corporate records](#) has identified 28 properties covering 718 hectares that are owned by companies that list De Gasperis and his brothers, Carlo and Michael De Gasperis, as directors. The seven different companies paid more than \$21.5 million for the lots, 24 of which were purchased before the Greenbelt was created.





early 2000s to protect the DRAP, said she was shocked to hear it could soon be open for housing.

"We won. At the time, we thought we were done," said Littley. "It's probably the most protected land in all of Ontario."

Littley said she's now attempting to revive her former network of concerned citizens and connect with new ones to stand against the province's Greenbelt proposal.

"If the Greenbelt is allowed to be touched now, what about all the other developers that own land in the Greenbelt? Are they lining up at Doug Ford's door already?" she asked.

In a statement last week, the conservation authority said the province's proposal involving the DRAP could result in "large-scale unplanned urbanization" and negatively impact nearby watersheds.

"Unlike the typical process followed for other urbanization proposals, there has been no watershed plan or subwatershed plan and supporting environmental studies completed for this area involving [TRCA] to inform this decision," the statement read.

A spokesperson for Clark, the housing minister, declined to answer whether developers lobbied for specific lands to be opened.





quickly, and that the expansion of the Greenbelt could be achieved."

Podbielski said the province moved to repeal the DRAP Act after receiving requests from the former and current mayor of Pickering.

Tight building timeline can be met, mayor says

It's unclear what the fate of the preserve lands will be going forward — whether the De Gasperis family and other landowners in the area plan to build on the land they own or sell it.

CBC Toronto reached out to Tacc Developments to request an interview with one of the De Gasperis brothers or a company representative, but an executive assistant said they were out of the country for a family wedding and unable to respond. A list of questions subsequently sent by email went unanswered.

If the Greenbelt land swap goes forward, the Ford government has said it expects landowners to prepare housing plans quickly, with construction to begin no later than 2025. Otherwise, the land will revert to its previous protected status.

Pickering Mayor Kevin Ashe said the local council has been asking for development on the DRAP for 20 years, arguing its inclusion in the Greenbelt was based on "political science," not "real science."

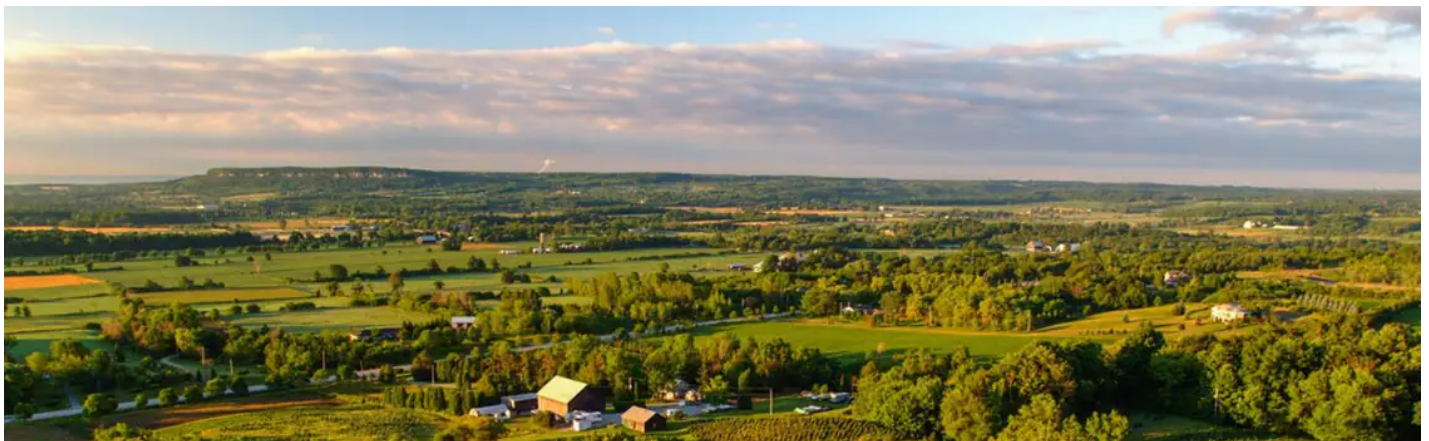




The De Gasperis brothers, who also own properties in Vaughan and Richmond Hill that are slated for removal from the Greenbelt, are prolific donors to Ontario political parties.

According to Elections Ontario data, the De Gasperis brothers and their companies — Tacc Developments, Tacc Construction, Arista Homes and Opus Homes — have donated at least \$163,362 to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario and its politicians since 2014, the last date for which data is available online.

WATCH | Plan to develop Ontario's Greenbelt for housing sparks criticism:



Coalition slams plan to build housing in Ontario's Greenbelt

15 days ago | 2:06

A coalition of 200 groups and individuals has penned a letter calling out the Ontario government for its plans to have tens of thousands of homes located in the province's Greenbelt, a swath of protected green space and farmland.

The data shows they also donated at least \$84,413 to the Ontario Liberal Party when it was in government and \$27,981 to the Ontario NDP, the data shows.

Other family members appear to have donated tens of thousands more.

CBC Toronto matched the names listed, but was unable to independently verify the contributors are the same people.

De Gasperis family companies have also employed at least three lobbyists with close ties to the PC government, according to records kept by the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, but none of the records indicate they were hired to influence decisions on the Greenbelt.

- ***Want more on this story? Reporter Ryan Patrick Jones spoke with CBC Radio's Metro Morning about this investigation and why it matters as the province continues its push to open the Greenbelt to development. You can listen to that interview below:***



Metro Morning 6:41

Developers could cash in big with the Ford government's plan to open up the Greenbelt. CBC Toronto's Ryan Jones explains one developer family's situation

CBC's Ryan Patrick Jones has been looking into one of the tracts of Greenbelt land set to be developed, in Pickering, owned by the DeGasperis family.

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**ONTARIO REGULATION 770/21**

made under the

PLANNING ACT

Made: November 10, 2021

Filed: November 15, 2021

Published on e-Laws: November 15, 2021

Printed in The Ontario Gazette: December 4, 2021

ZONING ORDER - TOWNSHIP OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK**Definition**

1. In this Order,

“zoning by-law” means Comprehensive Zoning By-Law No. 2010-001-ZO of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Application

2. This Order applies to the lands in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in the Regional Municipality of York, in the Province of Ontario, being the lands identified on a map numbered 274 and filed at the Toronto office of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing located at 777 Bay Street.

Permitted uses

3. (1) Every use of land and every erection, location or use of any building or structure is prohibited on the lands described in section 2, except for the following:

1. The uses identified as permitted uses for the RN3 and RN4 zones set out in section 5A.1 of the zoning by-law.
2. The uses identified as permitted uses for the CM2 zone set out in section 6.1 of the zoning by-law, except for the uses set out in subsection (2).
3. A stormwater management facility.
4. Flood and erosion control.

(2) Despite paragraph 2 of subsection (1), the lands described in section 2 shall not be used for the following uses:

1. Assembly halls.
2. Automotive sales and services uses.
3. Automotive service stations.
4. Car wash facilities.
5. Commercial recreation.
6. Conference, convention or banquet facilities.

7. Drive thru facilities.
8. Funeral homes.
9. Garden supply establishments.
10. Hotels.
11. Manufacturing, assembling or processing facilities.
12. Schools.
13. Wholesale sales and distribution.

Zoning requirements

4. (1) The zoning requirements for the uses permitted under paragraph 1 of subsection 3 (1) are the zoning requirements set out in section 5A.2 of the zoning by-law, except the minimum lot frontage for townhouse dwellings is 5.5 metres per dwelling unit.

(2) The zoning requirements for the uses permitted under paragraph 2 of subsection 3 (1) are the zoning requirements set out in section 6.2 of the zoning by-law, except,

- (a) the minimum density is 65 units per net hectare and the maximum density is 140 units per net hectare; and
- (b) the maximum building height is 26.0 metres.

Terms of use

5. (1) Every use of land and every erection, location and use of buildings or structures shall be in accordance with this Order.

(2) Nothing in this Order prevents the use of any land, building or structure for any use prohibited by this Order if the land, building or structure is lawfully so used on the day this Order comes into force.

(3) Nothing in this Order prevents the reconstruction of any building or structure that is damaged or destroyed by causes beyond the control of the owner if the dimensions of the original building or structure are not increased and its original use is not altered.

(4) Nothing in this Order prevents the strengthening or restoration to a safe condition of any building or structure.

Deemed by-law

6. This Order is deemed for all purposes, except the purposes of section 24 of the Act, to be and to always have been a by-law passed by the council of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Commencement

7. **This Regulation comes into force on the day it is filed.**

Made by:

STEVE CLARK

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Date made: November 10, 2021

Contributor Name

(all) +

Recipient

(all) 🔍

Party

(all) ▼

Event Type ⓘ

(all) ▼

Event

(all) ▼

Year

2014 ▼ to 2023 ▼

More ▼

Electoral District ⓘ

(all) ▼

Contribution Amount ⓘ

(min) to (max)

Recipient Type ⓘ

(all) ▼

Source ⓘ

(all) ▼

Contributions under \$100.01 do not appear on the search results

"Quinto, Berardino" ✕

2014 - 2023

Reset Filter

Political Contributions


Download

The search returned 1 match (1 page)

	Contributor	Recipient	Recipient Type ⓘ	Party	Electoral District ⓘ	Amount ⓘ	Source ⓘ	Year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quinto, Berardino	Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario - Scarborough Southwest	Association	PCP	098 - Scarborough Southwest	\$446.00	Final	2018

Home | Business News | CBJ Newsmakers | Ontario Home Builders' Association Names Luca Bucci as New CEO

ONTARIO HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION NAMES LUCA BUCCI AS NEW CEO

 North York, Ontario, June 07, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — The Ontario Home Builders' Association (OHBA) is proud to announce Mr. Luca Bucci as its new Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Bucci, who was selected following an exhaustive seven-month-long search, previously served as Chief of Staff for the Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a post he held from January 2021 until March 2022. Prior to that he served as the Vice-President of the Chartered Accounts of Ontario, where he developed, maintained, and engaged in working relationships with elected and non-elected government officials to support the regulation of the accounting profession in the public interest. His previous roles included Chief of Staff with both the Ontario Minister of Transportation and the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

That wealth of experience and government interaction, particularly his recent exposure to the home building industry, made Mr. Bucci the ideal candidate, says OHBA President Bob Schickedanz.

"It's truly hard to understate how thorough and intensive the search was to identify our next CEO. It's a process that commenced last October with the hiring of Boyden Canada: Executive Search and Consulting Firm, and included dozens of worthy candidates," Schickedanz notes. "But the résumé and passion that Luca brought to the table were really special. He has an exceptional network at Queen's Park and Parliament Hill and has shown ability to multitask in high-pressure situations with great attention to detail. I don't think I've met anyone more

passionate about the home building industry and the challenges Ontarians currently face with respect to housing affordability and supply. That's particularly important given the need to build at least 1 million new homes in the next 10 years if we're to accommodate the province's forecasted population growth."

"The home building industry has always been something I've really cared about," Bucci says. "This is a unique opportunity to become the next person in a long line of great service to the home building industry at a very important time. Right now, we have all levels of government talking about the issues of housing supply and how it relates to housing prices. Our members are going to be a key piece to the solution. I really want to play a part in that, while strengthening the base of OHBA and looking after the concerns of our members."

About the OHBA: The Ontario Home Builders' Association (OHBA) is the voice of the residential construction industry in Ontario, representing more than 4,000 member companies organized into 27 local associations across the province. Its membership is made up of all disciplines involved in residential construction, including builders, professional renovators, trade contractors, manufacturers, consultants, and suppliers. Its members have built more than 700,000 homes in the past 10 years in over 500 Ontario communities. The residential construction industry employs over 500,000 people and contributes over \$60 billion to the provincial economy.

-30-

CBJ Newsmakers

Office of the Integrity Commissioner

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION

[Home](#) [Public Search](#)[New Search](#)[Back to Results](#)

In-house Organization Lobbyist Registration

[Active Registration](#)[Previous Registrations](#)

Profile Information

Lobbyist Number

OL0310

Registration No.

OL0310-20060718120736

Initial Filing Date

2006-07-18

Last Amendment Date

2022-08-17

Senior Officer

First Name

Luca

Middle Initial

Last Name

Bucci

Name of your Organization

Ontario Home Builders' Association

Language



English



Français

Business Address of Senior Officer

Street Number and Name

20 Upjohn Road, Suite 101

City

North York

Prov./State

Ontario

Postal Code/Zip

M3B 2V9

Email

Phone

Ext

Fax

Country

Canada

Current In-house Lobbyists

List each employee whose duties include lobbying, including the senior officer if applicable.

Name	Title	Former public offices held
Alex Piccini	Manager of Government Relations	Employee in the office of a minister of Cabinet;
Larry Kotseff	Director of Provincial Planning Policy and Advocacy	None of the above;
Luca Bucci	Chief Executive Officer	Employee in the office of a minister of Cabinet;

Former In-house Lobbyists

List each former in-house lobbyist. (If you are creating a new, Initial Registration, this question does not apply).

Name
Jon Whyte
Kevin Fergin
Pauline Lip
Neil Rodgers
Audrey Jacob
Jeannette Gillezeau
Vince Molinaro
John Meinen
Rob Howe
Stephen Hamilton
Jackie Callie
Larry Masseo
Suzanne Mammel
Michael Pozzebon
Doug Tarry
Peter Saturno
Michael Collins-Williams
Michael Dauncey
Pierre Dufresne
Peter Debiasco
Joe Vaccaro
Jamie Adam
Miyoko Oikawa
Rick Martins
Bob Schickedanz
Louie Zagordo
Christina Giannone
Bob Ridley
Dave Depencier
Chuck McShane


Organization Information

Briefly describe the organization's business or activities.

Advocating on behalf of the Ontario new housing, land development and professional renovation industry. [NOTE: Mr. Bucci has not and will not lobby (i) the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, (ii) the Office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and/or (ii) the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, until at least April 1, 2023.]

Briefly describe the organization's membership or classes of membership, and list the names of the officers or directors of the organization.


OHBA represents land developers, home and condominium builders, professional renovators, suppliers, consumer service professionals, and financial institutions. The officers of the OHBA are: (1) Luca Bucci, (2) Sajida Jiwani, (3) Robert ("Bob") Schickedanz and (4) Susan Cudahy. The directors of the OHBA are: (1) Robert ("Bob") Schickedanz, (2) Rick Martins, (3) Louie Zagordo, (4) Dave Depencier, (5) Steve Deveau, (6) Susan Cudahy, (7) Christina Giannone, (8) Pierre Dufresne, (9) Nik Mracic, (10) Mike Memme, (11) Garnet Northey, (12) Tom McLaughlin, (13) Derek Cashmore, (14) Heather Galloway, (15) Maria Kyveris, (16) Nick Carnicelli, (17) Heljar Hansen, (18) David Renfroe, (19) John-Ross Parks, (20) Jon Rumble, (21) Jason Sheldon, (22) Sue Wastell, (23) Gary Burtch, and (24) Stacey Hawkins.

 Has any organization or entity (or individual on its behalf) contributed \$750 or more in the entity's or organization's previous fiscal year to this lobbying activity?

If yes, provide name(s) and address(es)

Name	Business Address	City	Prov./State	Postal Code/Zip	Country
There are no records available					

Government Funding

 Has your organization received any government funding (federal, provincial and/or municipal) in the government's previous fiscal year?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Name of Government or Government Agency	Amount (please enter numerical value without a dollar sign)
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development	\$2,766,484.00
City of Toronto (Toronto Atmospheric Fund)	\$70,000.00


Subject Matter

What is the subject-matter of your lobbying activity?

Accessibility;Economic development and trade;Environment;Housing;Industry;Infrastructure;Municipal affairs;Training and skills development;Transportation;

Lobbying Activity

Tell us about your current lobbying activity. Complete all that apply. You must choose at least one option:

 Legislative proposal **Yes**

Describe your lobbying goal(s) in detail. What are you attempting to influence or accomplish as a result of your communications with Ontario public office holders?

[1] Communicating with government officials about land use and planning matters, including proposed or pending amendments to the (i) Development Charges Act, (ii) the Planning Act and (iii) the Conservation Authorities Act. [2] Communicating with government officials about approval of official plans under the Planning Act, including (i) the proposed "Peterborough Official Plan" and (ii) the proposed "Ottawa Official Plan".

Lobbying Targets: Ministers' Offices

Office of the Attorney General of Ontario
Office of the Government House Leader
Office of the Minister of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs
Office of the Minister of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade
Office of the Minister of Finance
Office of the Minister of Infrastructure
Office of the Minister of Mines
Office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Office of the Minister of the Environment Conservation and Parks
Office of the Minister of Transportation
Office of the Associate Minister of Transportation
Office of the Minister of Tourism Culture and Sport
Office of the Premier and Cabinet Office
Office of the President of the Treasury Board

Ministries

Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs
Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade
Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Infrastructure
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of the Attorney General
Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks
Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport
Ministry of Transportation
Treasury Board Secretariat

Members of Provincial Parliament - MPPs

-

Agencies

Metrolinx
Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation (Infrastructure Ontario)
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Other

 Bill or resolution **No**

 Regulation **Yes**

Describe your lobbying goal(s) in detail. What are you attempting to influence or accomplish as a result of your communications with Ontario public office holders?

[1] Communicating with government officials about environmental regulatory matters, including (i) the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' ("MECP") "Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Guidance Manual", (ii) the MECP's "Proposed Subwatershed Planning Guide", (iii) regulatory proposals (under Phase 2) of the Conservation Authorities Act, and (iv) the MECP's "Implementation Pause of Excess Soil Requirements in effect January 1, 2022. [2] Communicating with government officials about regulations under the Condominium Act, including O. Regs. 541/20, 377/17, 181/17, 179/17, 49/01 and 48/01.

Lobbying Targets: Ministers' Offices

Office of the Attorney General of Ontario
Office of the Government House Leader
Office of the Minister of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade
Office of the Minister of Finance
Office of the Minister of Infrastructure
Office of the Minister of Mines
Office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Office of the Minister of the Environment Conservation and Parks
Office of the Minister of Transportation
Office of the Associate Minister of Transportation
Office of the Minister of Tourism Culture and Sport
Office of the Premier and Cabinet Office
Office of the President of the Treasury Board

Ministries

Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade
Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Infrastructure
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of the Attorney General
Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks
Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport
Ministry of Transportation
Treasury Board Secretariat

Members of Provincial Parliament - MPPs

-

Agencies

Metrolinx
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Other

 Policy and/or program **Yes**

Describe your lobbying goal(s) in detail. What are you attempting to influence or accomplish as a result of your communications with Ontario public office holders?

[1] Communicating with government officials, in general, about housing matters in Ontario. These communications will encourage the government to take measures: (i) to build new houses and communities, (ii) to grow the skilled labour force, (iii) to stabilize housing prices, and (iv) to reduce regulatory red tape. [2] Communicating with government officials about adopting a utilities model for water and wastewater infrastructure.

Lobbying Targets: Ministers' Offices

Office of the Attorney General of Ontario
Office of the Government House Leader
Office of the Minister of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade
Office of the Minister of Finance
Office of the Minister of Infrastructure
Office of the Minister of Labour Immigration Training and Skills Development
Office of the Minister of Mines
Office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Office of the Minister of the Environment Conservation and Parks
Office of the Minister of Transportation
Office of the Associate Minister of Transportation
Office of the Minister of Tourism Culture and Sport
Office of the Premier and Cabinet Office
Office of the President of the Treasury Board

Ministries

Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade
Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Infrastructure
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks
Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport
Ministry of Transportation
Treasury Board Secretariat

Members of Provincial Parliament - MPPs

-

Agencies

Building Code Commission
Metrolinx
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Other

 Decision to privatize or outsource goods or services **No**

 Grant and/or contribution and/or other financial benefit **Yes**

Describe your lobbying goal(s) in detail. What are you attempting to influence or accomplish as a result of your communications with Ontario public office holders?

[1] Communicating with government officials about financial support for homebuyers, more specifically (i) creating and implementing a fulsome Home Renovation Tax Credit (HRTC), (ii) increasing the HST housing threshold for new housing from \$400,000 to \$600,000, (iii) indexing the HST

housing threshold to inflation, and (iv) requiring municipalities to accept Pay-on-Demand Surety Bonds (PODSB). [2] Communicating with government officials about (i) increasing stimulus funding for infrastructure and transportation projects and (ii) increasing funding for the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT).

Lobbying Targets: Ministers' Offices	Ministries
Office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Members of Provincial Parliament - MPPs	Agencies
-	-

Other

Communication Techniques

What techniques of communication have you used or expect to use in the course of your activities? Check all that apply:

Arranging Meeting(s), Attending Meeting(s), Telephone Calls, Informal Communication, Presentations, Grassroots Lobbying, Written Communication (hard copy or electronic),

Other: Mr. Bucci has not and will not lobby (i) the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, (ii) the Office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and/or (ii) the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, until at least April 1, 2023.

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législative
de l'Ontario

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

HE-9

Journal des débats (Hansard)

HE-9

Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy

More Homes Built Faster Act,
2022

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 10 November 2022

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

Loi de 2022 visant à accélérer
la construction de plus
de logements

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi 10 novembre 2022

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Thursday 10 November 2022

Jeudi 10 novembre 2022

The committee met at 1000 in the Garden Banquet and Convention Centre, Brampton.

MORE HOMES BUILT FASTER ACT, 2022

**LOI DE 2022 VISANT
À ACCÉLÉRER LA CONSTRUCTION
DE PLUS DE LOGEMENTS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Supporting Growth and Housing in York and Durham Regions Act, 2022 / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant diverses lois, abrogeant divers règlements et édictant la Loi de 2022 visant à soutenir la croissance et la construction de logements dans les régions de York et de Durham.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Isaiah Thorning):

Good morning, honourable members. In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, it is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Yes, I nominate MPP Amarjot Sandhu to act as Chair.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Isaiah Thorning):

Thank you. Do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Yes, I do.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Isaiah Thorning):

Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, I declare nominations closed and MPP Sandhu elected Acting Chair of the committee.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Brampton, Ontario. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to resume public hearings on Bill 23, An Act to amend various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Supporting Growth and Housing in York and Durham Regions Act, 2022. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard and broadcast and recording.

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

Seeing none, 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 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent members of the committee. Are there any questions?

**ONTARIO HOME BUILDERS'
ASSOCIATION**

ONTARIO FOR ALL

PEEL ACORN

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Seeing none, now I will call the first presenters of the day: the Ontario Home Builders' Association, Ontario for All and Peel ACORN. Can you please come forward? And please state your name for the record: Ontario Home Builders' Association, you can start your presentation whenever you are ready.

Mr. Luca Bucci: Thank you, Chair. My name is Luca Bucci and I am the CEO of the Ontario Home Builders' Association. I'm glad to be here today to speak in favour of Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022.

With more than 4,000 member companies, the OHBA is the voice of the home building, land development and professional renovation industries across the province of Ontario. To put residential construction's impact in perspective, consider that the building and renovation industry provides more than 554,000 jobs in the province, pays over \$37 billion in wages annually, and generates over \$76 billion in direct investment value.

OHBA is proudly affiliated with our 27 local associations, including the Building Industry and Land Development Association, the West End HBA and the Greater Ottawa HBA, as well as the Canadian Home Builders' Association. OHBA members construct the vast majority of new housing in the province, which represents approximately half of the housing starts in Ontario in any given year. Our members also renovate the existing housing stock and build purpose-built rentals across our region.

OHBA, for years, has been raising awareness about the growing housing supply problem across the province, which is a significant contributor to the affordability challenges we are experiencing. In 2021, OHBA worked with the Smart Prosperity Institute to better understand the disparities between housing supply and the projected family

formations in Ontario. The number we found was staggering: Over 2.2 million more people will call Ontario home by 2031. However, Ontario simply isn't building enough homes fast enough to meet the future demand.

Since 2021, we have seen demand further accelerate. By the time the province's Housing Affordability Task Force report was released, we all learned that 1.5 million homes were needed in the next decade. In addition, the federal government announced earlier this month that it plans to increase immigration targets for Canada to 500,000 people per year by 2025. Consider that 2021 was the best year for housing starts in Ontario in a generation. In that year, the industry built slightly more than 100,000 new homes. This means that we need to increase housing starts by 50% and keep building at that rate for a decade—a monumental challenge.

However, not meeting that objective would have real and significant negative impacts on Ontario's competitiveness, Ontario's quality of life and economic sustainability. What this means is that the goal of 1.5 million homes in the next 10 years is an enormous challenge that requires bold changes and innovative thinking. It requires significantly increasing the pace and volume of home construction in Ontario.

We've arrived at this housing supply crisis because of three long-standing challenges faced by new homeowners in the residential construction industry. First, there are too many added costs on new housing in the form of fees, taxes and charges from all layers of government. Second, it takes too long to obtain approvals to build new homes, with too many parties involved and too much duplication. Finally, land supply in Ontario is severely constrained or land is zoned in such a way that adding density or new homes is very difficult. It not only makes it challenging to add supply, but significantly drives up the cost of land.

OHBA supports Bill 23 because it will make it faster, easier and more affordable to build new homes. First, Bill 23 addresses rising costs for buyers. In many areas of Ontario, upwards of 25% of the cost of the average home is related to government fees, charges and taxes. Municipal fee charges have also been escalating significantly, with development charges increasing radically with little notice to builders or buyers. These fees are ultimately baked into the cost of new housing and are placed on the backs of new homeowners. Bill 23 adds predictability for new homeowners by defining what should and shouldn't be paid for by development charges, and limits future increases through freezing and limiting numerous charges, including development charges, community benefit charges and conservation authority fees.

Second, the bill makes it easier to add supply and density with new as-of-right zoning provisions.

Finally, Bill 23 will spur the construction of more housing by introducing a cultural change that is desperately needed. This legislation signals to municipalities that they must approve new housing in a timely manner, as required by provincial legislation. Simply put, it makes housing an imperative. It also encourages parties such as conservation authorities to remain focused on their core priorities. It

rejects the status quo of NIMBYism and even the ideologies of BANANAs—build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone—that hinders the addition of new homes. Finally, it focuses on more homes for people in all communities in Ontario, and a variety of homes for people at all stages of life. This is a housing culture change that is required across our province, and we are glad to see the province taking a lead.

In conclusion, we have on our hands a significant housing supply crisis that takes place in communities big and small across Ontario. The remedies are grounded in greatly increasing the supply of homes by speeding up approvals and building, therefore improving affordability and securing long-term competitiveness and livability in Ontario.

Bill 23 puts forward a bold vision and provides real solutions to help us address the housing supply crisis so that more Ontarians can find a home in a community where they can live, work and play.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak here today. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for your presentation.

Now I'd like to call Ontario for All. You can begin your presentation.

Mr. Sean Meagher: Thank you. My name is Sean Meagher. I'm the coordinator of Ontario for All, which is a project of the United Way serving Peel, Toronto and York region that supports non-profits to help them inform the public policy process. I'm very happy to be here today to bring forward concerns that have been raised in our meetings with non-profit leaders across the GTA and, indeed, across Ontario.

I want to start by saying that the goal of this bill—creating more homes that are more affordable for people in Ontario—is a laudable goal, and we welcome important steps that will help to create new units of affordable housing. It's no surprise that non-profit leaders value the reduction in taxes on non-profit developments that are committed to affordable housing, which would lower costs and make more projects viable. As-of-right permissions on secondary suites should remove some barriers to new homes, some of which are likely to be affordable. Those are steps forward.

However, there are a number of unintended consequences in this bill that undermine those efforts if they're not corrected. The bill, as it's currently written, would eliminate the charges that developers currently pay toward affordable housing. This will, according to recent estimates, eliminate hundreds of millions of dollars that municipalities currently invest in creating affordable housing, and that would dramatically reduce municipal affordable housing efforts.

In conversations with staff from Peel region, for example, it has become clear that their housing master plan—a master plan that Minister Sarkaria helped to launch—is dependent on those DCs and will have to be dramatically curtailed without them.

Kitchener non-profit housing providers tell me that they will be out of business without their municipal funding. The bill's removal of housing services from the list of allowable development charges undermines critical strategic investments that municipalities make to ensure affordable housing is getting built.

The bill also constrains municipal efforts to require affordable housing in new developments. The new limits on inclusionary zoning are well below the targets in by-laws that local governments have already passed, and these bylaws are based on rigorous local economic studies about the affordability of those provisions that are required by this government and carried out by consultants that are employed by the development industry to ensure that they are accurate. Local governments will lose much of the benefit of another tool that helps them create affordable housing locally.

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By setting the definition of affordability for home ownership at 80% of the market rate, units that would have sold for a million dollars are now considered affordable and exempted from development charges if they sell for \$800,000—\$800,000 homes are not affordable homes; this bill will make them that.

These aspects of the bill cut hundreds of millions of dollars from municipal investments in affordable housing and cancel plans that would have built thousands of new permanently affordable homes. That is definitely a step backwards on your goal.

Equally troubling, the bill puts at risk housing protection programs. Recent studies have shown that we are losing about 15 affordable units for every one that we're currently building. Preventing the loss of affordable homes is a critical part of success in any housing strategy.

Rental housing replacement programs ensure that when apartment buildings are redeveloped and affordable units are replaced at affordable prices, tenants have access to those units over the long term. These programs have saved 4,000 units of affordable rental housing in Ontario. Current applications for rental housing demolitions are nearly at a thousand units. These homes will be replaced under the existing policies, but would not be if those are repealed under this bill.

The bill also has a negative impact on day-to-day affordability for ordinary families. The bill cuts taxes and fees for developers, eliminating hundreds of millions in funding that used to go to building roads, sewers, parks and other amenities. But those roads and sewers are still needed, and funding them will put significant pressure on property taxes and on water bills, even though tax increases would be difficult for families to afford in these tough times.

The municipal government of York region put it very well in their recent report to council. They said this bill seems "to transfer risk from private developers to the public." They also said, "Any development charge reduction, exemption, discount, or removal ... may impact the ability of the region to deliver vital, growth-related infrastructure"—the infrastructure that allows us to build more

homes—and "the gap may need to be funded from" taxes and "user rates." This is bad news for struggling families.

Lastly, nothing in the bill ensures that the new homes that will be built—and built faster under this bill, built with public incentives—are in fact affordable. Though developers will benefit from hundreds of millions in tax cuts and fee cuts under this bill, there is nothing that requires them to build affordable units or pass any of those savings on to their customers. Unlike programs like the Housing Master Plan in Peel, unlike the Open Door program that Mayor Tory introduced in Toronto, where incentives and benefits are directly tied to the actual delivery of affordable units, this bill has no such provisions: no affordable housing agreements, no targets, no standards. While lower taxes and reduced regulatory requirements may lead developers to offer homes at less than the current market rates, there is nothing in the bill that prevents them from continuing to charge what buyers are willing to pay—and, in fairness, that is their obligation to their shareholders.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Sean Meagher: In short, the unexamined consequences of this bill are very likely to actually make it harder to produce affordable homes and—given the constraints on funding for infrastructure that supports new development—in many ways, harder to create more homes at all. Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for the presentation.

Our next presenter is Peel ACORN. If you can please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Tanya Burkart: Good morning. My name is Tanya Burkart, and I'm a member of Peel ACORN.

I just wanted to talk briefly about the root cause of the housing crisis, because this bill does not address the root causes: corporate landlords who are protected by federal law that allows them to not pay tax on the profits. They take their investment, and instead of investing in housing, they pay investors their dividends. There is also, in Ontario, a lack of vacancy control, so rent is not regulated. By restricting supply of rentable units, corporate landlords maintain high profits and also rent goes unregulated. For rent control between tenants, there is no set amount; they're not regulated in any way.

Bill 23 impacts inclusionary zoning laws that advocacy groups have advocated for over time. It took us a year in Mississauga to get 8% in certain regions, and the affordability period isn't 25 years; it's perpetuity. So you're taking affordable housing and, in 25 years, that housing will become unaffordable and market value. CMHC uses the definition of affordable housing at 30% of household income and not 80% of market value. There's a vast difference between those two numbers.

Relieving developers of fees—for roads, for sewer, for water, for hydro, for infrastructure—passes those fees on to municipalities and taxpayers. We already pay for health care, and so adding infrastructure values to land and property tax is not fair. Those fees were designed—if a

developer wants to develop and wants to build housing, those fees belong with the developer.

Rental replacement bylaws: Certain municipalities have bylaws that protect tenants in terms of renoviction and demoviction; they allow for replacement of units. This bill will strip tenants of those rights. It's overriding protection for tenants, and it's not maintaining the rental stock that we have.

I know in my community in Brampton, there hasn't been purpose-built rental for decades, and so we can't blame developers for not building, because the land is there. It's just that corporate landlords and developers don't want to build rental because there's more money in condos. In our community, we need two- and three-bedroom units. Developers don't want to pay to build two- and three-bedroom units. And so supply isn't because we're not building houses; it's because developers are choosing to build a certain type of housing.

Other aspects of this bill that are concerning are the reduction of conservation authorities and environmental protections. The Premier has said that he does not want to take land from the greenbelt but has gone back on that and is taking land from the greenbelt. This bypasses targets for carbon reduction and emissions, and so the land use is not responsible.

I would like to end my submission by sharing my experiences with a big corporate landlord. My property was owned by Wynn Family Properties. Then in 2018 it was purchased by Starlight Investments, and in 2022 it was bought by Boardwalk—both large billion-dollar corporate landlords.

The journey has been alarming and scary. I've had to fight for basic smoke detectors, CO alarms. Conditions in the building such as mould, leaks—everything leaks: the roof, the faucets, the pipes. I've had to fight for the removal of faulty wiring. I have no accessibility, even today. There's been a lack of respect and intimidation from the landlord because I speak up.

The same three-bedroom townhouse that I rented in May 2018 for \$1,500 is now being rented for \$2,459. So the affordable housing that we have is being destroyed by corporate landlords. It's not that we don't have it. It's being turned into something else: unaffordable housing.

Tenants need more protections, not less, and just because you build it doesn't mean it's affordable for the missing middle like me. I make above guidelines for social housing, but I don't make enough to buy a house. The average house in Peel is \$1.2 million. So people on disability and seniors on fixed incomes? This bill does not provide affordable housing for us.

We've had chronic underfunding for decades from every level of government. The federal government, the provincial government and municipalities do not want to be in the housing business.

I strongly urge this committee and the government to consider the impact of Bill 23 on everyday people like me and on the tenants who are in desperate need of affordable housing and support. Thank you to the committee for letting me speak today.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start now with 39 minutes of questioning, and we'll start the first round with the official opposition. You have 7.5 minutes.

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Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. And it's two rounds, right?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes, two rounds.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay.

Thank you very much for coming in and speaking today and sharing your expertise, both of you, and your experience as a renter.

My first question is to Tanya Burkart: What would you like to see in Bill 23 that would provide better protections and stability for renters?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: Better protection is using CMHC's definition of affordable housing, which is 30% of household income, and for the housing to be kept affordable forever and not to return to market condition, because then it's no longer affordable housing by definition.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much.

My second question is to Sean Meagher. Sean, I would like you to, if you could, just clarify the differences in affordability with what the current city of Toronto definition of affordability is right now and what your concerns are with the changes to the definition of affordability in this bill.

Mr. Sean Meagher: Certainly. The city of Toronto is a good example. The city of Toronto uses, essentially, what the CMHC uses. Their current bylaw says that for an apartment to be considered affordable and for it to benefit from the incentives and the benefits that come with being designated an affordable unit, it has to be rented for 30% of the median income, for bachelors and one-bedrooms, and then there are slightly different rates for larger units, for three-bedroom and four-bedroom homes.

The dollar value of that difference is really quite significant. A bachelor is a really great example. A bachelor unit in the city of Toronto will rent for an average of about \$1,400 a month. The average income of the average Torontonians would sustain a rental of about \$880 a month. So we're talking about almost a 50% increase in the cost of an "affordable" unit if we move from one definition to another.

Definitions don't sound terribly exciting, but if you're the person who's paying 50% more in rent, that's a very exciting topic.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. And then can you just clarify for me how this changes the definition of affordability when it comes to the affordable own option?

Mr. Sean Meagher: So, affordable home ownership—the municipalities have the right to set what the affordable home ownership price would be, and they set it well below what this bill does. This bill sets it at 80% of the sale price of the average home of that type. Here in Peel, I believe the average home price is \$1.3 million, so that would put an affordable home in Peel at just over a million dollars. I know lots of people in Peel; I don't know very many of them who can afford a million-dollar home.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, that's very concerning to see what the definitions of affordability, these changes, mean when it comes to providing homes that are then exempt from development charges. It does seem quite concerning to me.

What would you recommend development charges be in this bill? If we were going to introduce amendments to the development charges piece, do you have recommendations for us or principles that we should abide by when we're thinking that through?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think it's really important to think about what development charges actually are. Development charges aren't like income taxes, where we're just trying to get a piece because we need to buy a lot of stuff. Development charges are specifically linked to the things we need to build in a city to make it sustainable as we build new development. So, roads and sewers—and, under some of the new legislation, parks—are rolled up into some of those things. And we have development charges for making sure that as we build new developments, as neighbourhoods improve, and gentrify, as they will as they improve, we're creating enough affordable housing to make sure that the families that are there can stay in their own neighbourhood. That's what that investment is.

This bill takes away from those development charges one component that's been critically important, and it's quite substantial, which is the housing services component. And it says, "That's not a thing that you need to build a city that works anymore. That's not a thing that you can charge developers in order to build a city that works anymore." Well, I encourage you to talk to anybody in municipal government, anywhere in Ontario, and see if they think that affordable housing is not something you need in order to make a city work in Ontario, because it absolutely is.

That removal, which mayors and AMO and regional councils have expressed concern about, really is a catastrophic component of this bill. It really will do an enormous amount of harm, so I strongly encourage the committee, when they get to clause-by-clause, to strike that component. It is deeply unhelpful.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Okay. One other question around the development charge piece. I notice that there is an elimination of development charges for non-profit housing, co-op housing, non-market housing. Do you have a position or a take on that piece, around if they should be eliminated, phased in, same rate?

Mr. Sean Meagher: The virtue of that adjustment is that it's tied to a benefit for the public. If you build non-profit housing, you can be exempted from development charges. That will lower your cost and you'll be able to build more non-profit housing in Ontario. What you'll get from that is guaranteed to be non-profit housing. It's a requirement of that arrangement.

There are a lot of non-profit housing developments that teeter on the brink—that just a little bit more money, a little bit more investment or a little bit of a break on land costs, or whatever it might be, and it can go ahead. I think that's very valuable, but it's valuable because it's an investment that we're making and we know what the return on that investment is. We're investing some development

charges that we would otherwise probably not collect, because those projects wouldn't go ahead, and we're getting affordable housing.

Many municipalities already do that. This would extend what most large cities either do regularly or do as a matter of course to all cities in Ontario, and that's really helpful.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My final question is around the impact of development charges on municipalities. We've had numerous submissions from the city of Toronto, Mississauga, Peel, talking about the reduction of fees, development charge fees, and how it will affect the municipal budget. In the case of the city of Toronto, Mayor Tory is estimating that it will lead to a reduction in revenue of about \$200 million. What role should the province play? What would be some solutions to fixing that \$200-million revenue hole that the city of Toronto has, and that other municipalities have something similar? How do we fix that piece?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think a good example of the province of Ontario doing something very smart to make sure the cities themselves do something smart is the provision in the inclusionary zoning legislation that says you can't pass a new inclusionary zoning bylaw—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off, but the time has come up. We'll continue that in the second round.

We'll move to the independent members now. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much for coming in up to Brampton, or over to Brampton, and sharing your stories and thoughts with us. I really appreciate you taking the time.

We know we're in a housing crisis. We want to do something about it. We should have done something about it a long time ago, but here we are. We want to get building—shovels in the ground, as they say—but we want to do it right. It's not about whether we do it; it's about how we do it. We need to do it smartly, sustainably, safely, equitably, affordably, and we need to have the right—a complete diverse array of housing types, not just your big single-family home with the white picket fence. That's not going to work everywhere. And we're in a climate crisis. Everyone is aware. We want to build resilient infrastructure. We've been warned by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, by the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation in Waterloo, about the return on investment for investing in climate adaptation versus the high cost of inaction.

My first few questions are for you, Luca, on the hot seat—a friendly hot seat. You're builders; you represent a bunch of builders. Can you tell me about your green builders and their approach to building sustainably? And any thoughts on the Toronto Green Standard?

Mr. Luca Bucci: It's a great question, and thank you for the opportunity to comment. Builders across Ontario, much to the cause of a lot of the policies that were brought in by the previous Liberal government, are held to a very high standard when it comes to building in an environmentally sustainable way. There's a number of studies that

we have to take with the Ministry of the Environment, both on the federal and the provincial level, before shovels can go in the ground anywhere. As you work through the building process, whether it's the grading process or whether it's the actual construction of the new home, a number of these environmental studies are being considered by these two levels of government to ensure that whatever type of home we build—whether it's a single-family home, whether it's a stacked townhome, or whether it's a condominium—are built in a way that is sustainable.

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As an industry, we actually believe that environmental sustainability and home construction can co-exist, because they have co-existed for the better part of a decade. We also go through rigorous studies on endangered species. There is a story of one of our members—I believe it was in Waterdown—who had to build a bridge to facilitate the crossing of either a turtle or a salamander within their housing development. So we're really focused on ensuring that whatever we're building is built in a sustainable way.

Municipalities, not only in Toronto but across the board, are considering a certain standard to apply to how we build our homes. Currently, the OHBA is working with the federal government on the national building code, which includes a number of green standards, not only on how you interact with the land but just the physical construction of the home itself.

A lot of our members appreciate that there is a concern on how the homes are built sustainably, and we are working well with all levels of government through these different processes to make sure that whatever home we build is built in a sustainable way.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So you'd be supportive. There's the Toronto Green Standard and then—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:—some municipalities have their green standards as well, but would you be supportive of a rollout across all municipalities for green standards for green buildings and building the green economy?

Mr. Luca Bucci: I think there's always an opportunity for municipalities, the province and the federal government to find ways to build more sustainable homes with our builders. Traditionally, our builders have been very co-operative to find ways to bring those standards into their construction processes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That's great to hear. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll move to the government side now for the first round of questioning. MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you to all the witnesses who are here today. The housing supply crisis, I really feel, is a generational challenge facing our province. We know, on this side, that we put forward a plan to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years because the supply simply isn't keeping up with the demand. The current market prices out millennial Canadians who did the right

thing—went to school, got good jobs—and can't get into the market. It prices out new Canadians who want to move to our province and make it their home. And it prices out seniors who are looking for revised places to live.

That being said, I have some questions for Mr. Bucci. We've heard some criticism from the opposition that says that when we lower development charges on building, the developers will simply pocket the savings and walk away with it. Why should anybody trust that the builders are going to be passing on those savings to the consumers?

Mr. Luca Bucci: On the issue of development charges or any charges that are associated with building, whether it's a parkland or community benefit charges, I just want to make one thing clear: The industry supports the concept that growth has to pay for growth. Our industry is not against development charges. Our industry isn't against parkland charges. Our industry isn't against CBCs. We actually think it's a way to facilitate the construction of homes faster, because the previous regime, when we're looking at how we can fund infrastructure, was a little bit, for lack of a better term, more slow to get these things online before these kinds of different charges come into play. What the industry has an issue with is that there have been a number of occasions, particularly since June of this year, where these charges have been increased exponentially without proper justification, most likely—and I'm just speculating—to kind of fund budgetary shortfalls within municipalities that were a result of COVID.

I'll give you two examples. One township in eastern Ontario started including the purchase of emergency cots in the development charges. I don't know much about infrastructure, but I don't think a cot is a waste water pipe or a water pipe that's going to facilitate housing development. So why are we bringing that into the development charge? Furthermore, in Burlington, parkland charges increased by 500% overnight in July. One of our members was put in a position where a parkland charge of, I think, \$5,000 per door went to \$25,000 per door, which put a \$5-million pressure on his development.

Now, when you construct homes you have financial obligations to banks, you have financial obligations to lenders, and you have financial obligations to the consumer who purchased that condo in a pre-construction contract. When you're adding a \$500-million pressure, that's—I would challenge you to find anybody working in any industry who can absorb a \$5-million pressure overnight. Right?

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Mr. Bucci. Another concern that we've heard—you know, we've heard from municipalities and other stakeholders saying that zoning is kind of the bottom issue; that there's all this land zoned that builders aren't building on, whether it's for the labour shortage, whether it's for commodity prices.

The example was given to me recently, thinking about a powerlifter, that it doesn't matter how much you squat; if the upper body isn't doing the rest of the work, you're never going to get the weight up. I look at this problem in a similar way. If we can't get the labour and the commodities—you know, we could zone everything to death. What

assurances do we have from the industry that the zoning changes that would be put forward in this bill would actually result in any new houses getting built?

Mr. Luca Bucci: Just sheer motivation by market demand; again, all markets are driven by the fact that if there's a demand, someone is going to build. The only reasons our builders aren't building on land that is already slated for build are lack of infrastructure, inability to get access to adequate supply and labour shortages. It's not like the industry is sitting on these lands to speculate, right? In the market that we had—every builder is incentivized to build to fill the demand that's created by the new homeowner. At the end of the day, just like if you're operating in any other industry, your primary incentive is to make sure you're meeting that demand of the consumer. So we have no reason to sit back on these pieces of land and wait to build on them when there is such a demand right now.

We have to build 1.5 million new homes. Even the CMHC, an industry that has a hand's-length tie to our industry, actually thinks that the number is closer to 1.8 million. These aren't numbers that are coming from our industry; these are numbers that are coming from credible sources who are involved in building houses on a daily basis.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks. We know the housing supply crisis, as I mentioned, hits millennials, hits new Canadians and hits seniors. Some of the changes that we're putting forward in this bill we hope will help seniors. Think of your own mother or your own parents' generation: What changes do you think we're making here that are actually going to be able to help your mother's generation?

Mr. Luca Bucci: Can I give you a personal example? My mother is currently thinking about moving my grandmother into her home. I think a lot of the provisions that you're bringing in with exclusionary zoning are going to help her do that in a way that's a lot easier and a lot more expedient, for lack of a better term.

I also think that the more you increase the opportunity to build homes from a perspective of supply, the more options you're going to give to different homeowners to participate in that market. And not only that, but the more homes that you build outside of the urban boundary means that you're freeing up homes within the urban boundary and within these densely populated areas for people who can't afford those single-family-type homes. The reason why there's such a demand for rent right now is because people can't afford to go live in the suburbs and then they're staying in these condos or these rental units downtown, right?

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks. I've got to give the rest of my time to Mr. Grewal.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you so much. First of all, welcome, everybody, to Brampton. Thank you for being here and joining us today on the standing committee for Bill 23. My question—since we're very limited on time, I'd ask you to keep it short, as well—is going to be to ACORN.

My question, Ms. Tanya: We talked a lot about housing affordability in your commentary, and I want to talk about the fact that Bill 23 allows for people to build secondary suites, allows for people to build garden suites. Do you believe that the construction of these suites is then going to further the rental supply, the affordable rental supply, for people to obtain homes, for newcomers that are coming here to get quality housing? Do you think that portion of Bill 23 is really going to help increase that supply and increase that rental availability?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: I think part of that process already occurs. I just think it occurs in a different manner. I do live in Brampton and I know that we have thousands of unregistered basement units—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Tanya Burkart: And so that process does occur. Yes, those—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: I'm so sorry to interrupt, because we're very short on time. Do you believe that the legalizing of all of these secondary suites and adding more garden suites is going to help increase (a) the rental demand and (b) that we have legalized apartments?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: Yes.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions? Seeing none, we'll move to the second round of questioning now.

We'll start this round with the independent members. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh, wow. We're going a different way. Usually it's—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Well, you had the first round. First, second and then—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Usually it always goes, or always went, to opposition, but—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): No, it's the Chair's discretion. The Chair decides on that, so independent members.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: You're keeping us on our game. Sorry to go ahead, but thanks. I'm happy to do that.

Tanya, thanks for your presentation. You brought up the conservation authorities, which we heard a lot about yesterday. My first question to you would be, do you feel that the conservation authorities have been doing a good job in protecting Ontarians and being good stewards of Ontario's lands?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: I can't speak to overall, but I know, in my community, yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great. I would ask the same of Sean: Your thoughts on the conservation authorities and the work they've done, their expertise?

Mr. Sean Meagher: Yes, the conservation authorities have been a really great partner, and in part because they do one of the things that I think MPP Bell was alluding to before, which is that they support local decision-making that can be responsive to different kinds of circumstances.

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River valleys, our lakes—they're all different; there's not a single type. So having local authorities that can look at the specific impacts of different kinds of changes on land that they know well is the most responsive and intelligent way to do that kind of regulation, and the conservation authorities have done that quite responsibly.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure. Great. And Tanya, who do you feel this bill would benefit the most and the least?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: The most? I think developers, because they have access to land they wouldn't normally. They have developer fees waived.

And let's be clear: Developers are billion-dollar corporations. They're not in it to build housing; they are in it to make money. And so, yes, they will provide affordable housing. Affordable for who? is the question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sean, the same question please.

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think it's pretty clear that the development industry benefits an awful lot from this. They get lower development charges. They get exemptions from development charges. They get accelerated approvals. They get access to land they didn't get access to before. And they get that with no obligations attached. It's entirely up to them whether they pass that along to consumers, whether they build affordably or not.

The province of Ontario has not matched what they're giving with what the public is getting. What the public gets is whatever the development industry wants to give them. What the province gives to the development industry is hundreds of millions of dollars in benefits that come out of public pockets, much of which will either have to mean cuts to services to ordinary Ontarians or increased taxes and water rates for ordinary Ontarians. There's a pretty big imbalance there.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, great. The last question is rapid-fire because I only have a minute or so. For all three of you: What's one piece of advice for us as we consider Bill 23? Luca.

Mr. Luca Bucci: One piece of advice is: Let's just make sure that all the facts are properly researched before we adhere to, let's say—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Luca Bucci: —some narratives that are coming from people who are perceived to be losing out from the bill. That would be my piece of advice.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, great. Tanya?

Ms. Tanya Burkart: Take your time and make sure that the development is responsible and that you're providing development and housing for the people that really need it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you. Sean?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I'd echo Tanya's comment: Take your time. These are big changes. It's a 227-page bill. It's moving pretty fast, and I think people have flagged a number of unintended consequences.

In particular, take your time to hear from the people who are responsible for looking after how this works on

the front lines: your municipal governments. Mayor Crombie is a smart woman. Mayor Tory is a smart guy. AMO is a responsible organization. And they're all saying there are risks here that you have not properly calculated. Slow down, figure out what they are and adjust to it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. The time has come up.

We'll move to the government side now for their second round. MPP Smith?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank all of the contributors this morning. We appreciate you coming here and providing your information.

This question, through you, Chair, is to Sean at Ontario for All.

Bill 23, if passed, would help cities, towns and rural communities grow with a mix of ownership. I listened to your statement regarding secondary legal units. Bill 23, if passed, would convert single and family homes and townhouses, mid-rise apartments. Streamlining the approval would increase affordable housing.

Do you have anything, in your opinion, that could be done, or could you make a statement regarding these specific units—red tape for a home would be decreased for the builder, and we would have multiple units in one single dwelling.

So I guess my question to you is: Could you talk about the amending and the zoning bylaws and how this missing middle that you touched upon with respect to increasing supply—how would this benefit the group that you are talking about as a secondary housing issue and on an affordability issue?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think two things about that—and thank you very much for the question, because I think it is really important.

Ontario has had a long history of trying to nudge municipalities in this direction and say, "Let's build more basement apartments; let's build more secondary suites." And it hasn't always taken, so I think that this is a valuable component of the bill.

I think it's important that we assess its value, though. The number of units of housing that we'll get out of that change is modest. Calculations on how much of the demand for affordable housing that will address are pretty low. They're in the 5% to 10% range.

The other thing I think is worth noting is the analysis of those units where they have been created. The affordability is pretty uneven. Sometimes they're affordable; sometimes they're not. It's a little less than 50%, I think, in the last study that I looked at.

It's a good step. It's a small step, but it's useful. But I think the other question that you raise—which is, "How do we get to that missing middle? How do we create a little bit more density that actually is affordable?" I think one of the things that everybody who deals with this issue recognizes is that we don't get where we need to go without investing.

If we just look at the cost of land and bricks and mortar and labour, there isn't a way to build right now that is

affordable to the average Ontarian without some kind of investment to achieve that affordability. When I talk to developers, when I talk to advocates, when I talk to tenants, when I talk to academics, they all say the same thing: We need investment to bridge that gap.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you. I'm going to pass the rest of my question time over to Mr. Holland.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Holland.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I echo my colleagues around the table and thank you for being here to discuss this important bill and the future of housing for Ontario. As we know and as the member opposite stated, this is something that's been neglected for many years, and we can't wait any longer.

To speak to your comment with regard to why we are moving so fast, we simply don't have a choice. There's too many Ontarians that are without a home and with nothing in the immediate future to provide them with them, so we owe it to our residents to make sure that we act quickly to ensure that people can get the housing they need when they need it.

My question is to Alex here. I've heard comments today—particularly from John. You made the comment that reducing development charges is going to hinder development. I fail to see that.

We collectively have \$8.2 billion—municipalities collectively have \$8.2 billion—in development fees that they've collected sitting in reserve funds. Those development charges were intended to spur on development, to put the infrastructure in place to increase housing for Ontarians. Instead, it's sitting in a bank earning municipalities interest. This bill speaks to us requiring municipalities to spend at least 60% of development charges on infrastructure projects for future housing developments. I think that's a good thing.

We also have heard that there's the development charges—municipalities are going to lose a source of revenue. My question to you, Alex, is, in your opinion, do you see that increasing housing stock will actually increase assessment value for a municipality, thereby increasing revenue potential for a municipality outside of development charges? Probably it's a more sustainable source of revenue for a municipality. Rather than a one-time development charge, they're going to see yearly taxation revenue coming off some of the development that's being proposed by us requiring them to spend the development charges. Could you speak to that, please?

Mr. Luca Bucci: Just to clarify—the question was directed to me?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Oh, sorry. Yes.

Mr. Luca Bucci: Alex is my colleague, but no problem.

Simple math: The more homes that you have on the tax base, the more tax revenues you can generate. The more tax revenues you can generate, municipalities have an opportunity to see whether or not they can offset some of the—I'm not going to call them “losses,” but maybe we can say “foregone revenues”—from the development change regime that you guys are bringing in. Because the way that the industry sees it is that you're not really scaling

back development charges on new home construction; you're putting in a system where increases are being rationalized and increases are coming in at a rate that the industry and the new homebuyer can afford, right?

Again, we have seen exponential increases since June, in some cases up to 500%, on these charges. When you are dealing with a 500% increase on these charges, it's hard to account for that economically.

Our industry—as much as the perception is that we're motivated by profit, it costs money to build homes. We have to borrow that money, and we are obligated to pay back banks. At some point, there's only so much you can pay back before that money has to go back to the consumer, go back to the new homebuyer or gets passed off to the homebuyer.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you for that.

How much time do we have left?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): About one minute.

Mr. Kevin Holland: So just quickly, I have a question to Sean. You spoke about conservation authorities in reply to a question from the member opposite, with regard to their role. I don't think anybody is denying the role that conservation authorities have in providing input with regard to responsible development. My issue is the timing of it. Do you feel the timing for conservation input is at the time the official plans are being developed that indicate the type of development for a community, or when a development is actually taking place? Personally, I think the role for conservation authorities is for input at the time that official plans are being developed. Every five years, we're required to do an official plan review, and at that time there can be input provided as well.

1050

Because what we're seeing right now is the ability for—conservation authorities are really hindering development at the time that development is looking to be taking place. When do you think is the appropriate time for conservation authorities to provide that input to municipalities?

Mr. Sean Meagher: When we look at the structure of the way we approve development, all municipalities create official plans. They're big, broad, general documents that lay out, roughly, how do we want to do this, in a big, broad brush strokes kind of way—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize. The time has come up.

We'll have to move to the official opposition. MPP Burch?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I think I'd like to give Mr. Meagher from Ontario for All a chance to finish his answer to that question.

Mr. Sean Meagher: That's very kind. Thank you. We also have secondary plans and zoning, so that as we get to the refined points of any development, we make sure that what was generally in the official plan actually suits the situation. Conservation authorities work the same way. They engage in the official plans, they do those broad

brush strokes, but at the time that you're developing, the specifics can matter and it's useful to have them involved.

I think it's worth noting that this bill doesn't just change the timing of participation for conservation authorities. It also constrains the scope of things that they can express concerns about, and that creates real risk for our natural environment, if they're not looking at the whole scope of the impact of a development.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions, MPP Burch?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Yes. I just want to shift over to the Ontario Home Builders' Association for a moment. Mr. Bucci, a lot of the housing legislation that the government has come forward with seems to be directed at municipalities and the kind of time that it takes municipalities for approvals. I think there are some legitimate points that have been raised in some time limits that have been set.

But not so long ago, Ontario's Big City Mayors released some statistics that there were about 250,000 units of housing at the time that had already been approved. So they had already gone through the municipal approval process, they've taken up the time and resources at municipalities, and action wasn't taken by the developers and builders on it. That's a substantial amount of housing. Don't you think it's fair that if we are blaming municipalities for the problem, that we're also taking a look at developers and perhaps putting a sunset clause on approvals, so that developers actually have to move rather than speculate and delay building?

Mr. Luca Bucci: It's a great question. I'm very, very familiar with the Ontario's Big City Mayors talking point that we were sitting on a lot of these undeveloped units. In most cases, these undeveloped units are undeveloped because we're still waiting on comments from provincial regulatory authorities. Even though we do have the permits, we are waiting for servicing to be brought into the site, and that's being held up by, again, commenting bodies at both the municipal and provincial level and at the conservation authority level.

In a situation where you're in a crisis and there's such a demand for housing, our industry is motivated to build the housing. We're not sitting on these lots because we want to speculate; I can't say that to a 100% degree, but for the majority of the cases, we are still waiting on comments from provincial agencies, federal agencies, municipal agencies and conservation authorities before we can get to work. Just because you have a permit doesn't mean that you can start building.

So what I would like to close with is that even as part of our advocacy, we asked the government to look at all processes, not just municipal processes. We said, "This is a problem that is happening at all levels of government. There are commenting agencies that are taking a lot of time." In our five-point advocacy plan, we said that the government needs to look at the municipalities and within their own government, in their commenting agencies, to make sure that these processes are streamlined, so we're not sitting on undeveloped lots and we can get building faster.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I appreciate your perspective. Just to be clear, the big city mayors did indicate that most of the problem had to do with speculation, and so I assume that you disagree with the—

Mr. Luca Bucci: I think that is probably the one point where our industry and Ontario's Big City Mayors would have a bit of a disagreement. Some of the members I have talked to, in situations where they are sitting on permitted lots, are waiting for comments from either the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of the Environment or a conservation authority before they can move through with their development.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Okay. I'd like to go to Mr. Meagher with the same question. Also, how much does speculation play into the problem that we have with housing supply in general and affordable housing?

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think we run into a whole bunch of problems with the economics of housing, as Tanya pointed out, if we're not investing in making affordability happen. I understand that there are lots of causes for developers to be sitting on top of lots; the Big City Mayors have done a lot of analysis of this. They're certainly identifying speculation as a big issue. We're talking about, just in the GTA, a quarter-million homes. There are a lot of units that are not being built, and so the idea that we just need to accelerate the approvals and homes will pop up everywhere is hard to justify, given the actual data on the ground.

I think that that's one of the things that's really important about the task of slowing down and thinking about this properly—and not slowing down for years, but slowing down long enough to do the math. How many, exactly, of these units are held up by speculation versus approval processes? We don't really have an answer to that question that's detailed enough. Let's make our decisions about important issues like affordable housing based on real data, not on talking points. I completely agree with the home builders' association on that point: Let's get the real numbers and find out what the actual barriers are.

But certainly one of the barriers is that we've had an enormous amount of inflation in housing costs, because there's not enough labour, there are not enough materials. We've been upzoning, trying to use the market to find a way to lower the costs, and it hasn't worked. Land prices have skyrocketed. Every time we increase the density, the land price increases to match, and the price of houses, of homes, continues to go up.

What we need is a system that is like the one that they use all across the United States, where we tie those benefits to a specific obligation to deliver affordable units, and we make the necessary investments to bridge the gap between costs and what people can afford.

Mr. Jeff Burch: The government's own Housing Affordability Task Force pretty clearly identified that the provincial government wasn't keeping up proportionately with the federal government when it comes to investments in social housing. Is it possible to address the issue of affordable housing or housing in general without having

some kind of a strategy around social housing and investing in those solutions?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Sean Meagher: I think the evidence all over North America is that we do need to invest in a strategic way to bridge those gaps. You can't just buy your way out of this willy-nilly, but it's those strategic investments and a coherent plan for that, and it's really important that the province of Ontario play a big role in that.

We talked about that. The housing task force talked about that, but so does the region of Peel. We have a great representation from Peel regional MPPs here. But the region of Peel master plan for affordable housing relies on all three levels of government investing. The cities and the regional government can invest because they have the revenues from development charges that they're going to lose, and the province of Ontario needs to be a full partner in that. That's what the folks on the front line trying to solve affordable housing are asking for.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. That concludes our time for the first group of presenters. I would like to thank all three presenters for coming today. We appreciate your presentations.

FUTURE MAJORITY

MR. FELIX VORTSMAN

BRAMPTON ENVIRONMENTAL
ALLIANCE

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Now I would like to call upon the next group of presenters: Future Majority, Felix Vortzman and the Brampton Environmental Alliance. Can you please come forward?

Future Majority, if you can please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Ottavia Paluch.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may go ahead.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Okay. Thank you, Chair. My name is Ottavia Paluch. I'm a first-year student at the University of Toronto Mississauga, and I'm here this morning with Future Majority. We are a non-partisan organization that elevates youth priorities to the agenda.

I joined the Future Majority team as a volunteer about six months ago, so this is the first time I've actually gotten involved with politics. I've also never spoken in front of this many people who have the power to make things happen before. Like, how cool is that?

Interjection.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Well, thanks. I appreciate that.

As exciting as it is for me to be up here today, I'm also really scared. I'm going to be completely honest. I'm scared to be up here, all by myself, because those are the rules. My team isn't allowed to be up here with me today. I'm scared you're going to ask me questions that I don't know the answers to. And I'm scared for the future, especially if this bill is passed the way it is currently written,

creating problems for communities trying to respond to climate change and affordability.

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Specifically, today we're asking that you amend this bill so that it doesn't override council-approved green and sustainable design standards that include energy efficiency. To be clear, that means we want municipalities that already have green development standards or green design standards in place to be able to continue to enforce those guidelines. On top of that, we want to give municipalities the power to pass new guidelines if they so choose.

Now, I grew up quite oblivious to the effects of climate change. At home, whenever the topic came up, my parents would usually say something along the lines of, "Whatever. We're all going to die anyway." Yet as mentions of climate change increased in the news, in my elementary and secondary school classes and also on social media, it began to feel increasingly impossible to ignore. It began to dawn on me that my future was no longer promised, that the future of my generation and the generation after mine was no longer promised. It felt harrowing and scary and sad. I remember being invited to go to my first Future Majority event and being unsure if there was even much of a point in getting involved. But being in that room, surrounded by all of these young people from all sorts of different socio-economic and political backgrounds, coming together for a common cause—that meant something. Something really shifted for me that day.

My friends and I were really surprised to learn of the enormous impact of buildings on the climate crisis. That's right. Canada's energy regulators' most recent statistics state that buildings are the second-largest emitting sector in the province. And in my hometown of Mississauga, their 2021 climate action plan determined that buildings are the number one emitter. We've been so stoked to learn that, in response, municipalities across Ontario have been making big strides on climate and affordability, and we would love to see that incredible momentum continue.

What we're asking for today is not particularly radical or revolutionary, but Bill 23, as it is currently written, will make it much harder to implement council-approved green and sustainable design standards in municipalities across Ontario that include energy efficiency.

Young people recognize, of course, that we cannot focus solely on the climate crisis, because the housing crisis is a whole other ballgame, and it's all too real. But here's the thing: Affordability and energy efficiency are not enemies. Better-insulated homes keep heat and cool air from leaking out, saving residents huge amounts of money on energy bills. Low- and no-carbon heating and cooling systems like heat pumps and high-efficiency appliances—those things shield residents from increasingly volatile gas prices. We also need to ensure that the 1.5 million homes we're building through this bill don't need retrofitting within a decade or two, because that cost is going to fall to our generation.

We are young people. We care about our province and our country's well-being, as well as its present and its future. We're not policy experts, so we're referring to the

Atmospheric Fund's expertise in this space. We suggest that you refer to the open letter that they've written in response to this bill. They offer an amendment that will guarantee municipalities the power to implement green and sustainable design standards across Ontario without impacting the government's goals to get homes built quickly.

I can speak from experience: Youth have enough on our plate. We're counting on our political leaders to show leadership on climate, because we have exams to write. We do not have time for hurricanes.

And let me tell you, week after week, I'm left breathless, in awe of the energy of my incredible teammates on the Future Majority team—how fired up we are to change things and fix things, and how stoked we are to save the planet in our own, small, passionate, powerful way. That brings me so much hope.

It brings me so much hope to show you that behind me, we've brought a legion of young people to today's hearing. If you guys wouldn't mind standing up—

Interjection.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Yes, give it up. Listen—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Order.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I would just love it if we all took a second and just absorbed the power of this moment. Just look at us. Look at how cute we are. How could you possibly say no to our demands? This is what a youth movement looks like.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: One minute, sir?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Yes.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Okay. This is why I've taken a day away from classes. This is why my friends, teammates and I have been calling other folks, young folks, all week and encouraging them to call you directly with the same message that I've provided today.

We are asking that you modify this bill so we can get back on track to meeting our climate emissions targets. We are asking that you modify this bill to make sure hard-won municipal climate policies aren't reversed overnight. We're asking that you modify this bill just a little teeny, tiny bit so that it doesn't override council-approved green and sustainable design standards in municipalities across Ontario that include energy efficiency.

Because this is a once-in-a-generation bill that's going to set the table for the next several decades, and my generation, alongside young people all over this province—we are counting on you. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for your presentation.

We will next move on to Felix Vortsman. If you could please state your name for the record. You will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: Good morning. My name is Felix Vortsman. I would like to thank the committee members and all participants for the opportunity to present to all of you today. I am a real estate investor, landlord, real estate investment coach and realtor exclusively focused on investment in rental properties across the entire greater

Golden Horseshoe region and beyond. I appear before you today mainly in my capacity as an Ontario small landlord and real estate investor, and am therefore representing thousands of small landlords across the province who provide affordable housing options and rentals to approximately five million Ontario residents, which is approximately one third of Ontario's population.

I personally own and operate approximately 120 rental units across several municipalities within the greater Golden Horseshoe and Kingston and therefore have intimate boots-on-the-street knowledge of the challenges being faced by small and mid-size landlords and investors broadly across the greater Golden Horseshoe region, as well as municipal-specific challenges that we continue to face.

Unfortunately, Bill 23 fails to address those challenges, as it mainly serves to address new-build real estate developments, which are now oppressively expensive for both end-user homebuyers and investors alike, while at the same time largely failing to consider the challenges being faced by small landlords and investors with respect to our single-family-to-multi-family conversion efforts, including inconsistent interpretation and application of the Ontario building code, especially part 11 of the OBC, by each respective municipality across the province; overly onerous, impractical and at times very costly, yet needless, stipulations in the OBC with respect to the various aspects of the single-family-to-multi-unit conversions by small investors—as most large land developers and builders largely do not operate in this arena—and yet we small landlords are the ones who are providing roofs over the heads of one third of Ontario's population; excessive red tape and wait times to get our plans approved and permits issued for single-family homes to legal two- and even three-unit—and, by the way, there's also the potential of up to five units—conversion projects, including continuing pervasive municipal NIMBYism that we continue to face in several municipalities across the province, such as:

—arbitrary and inconsistent maximum or minimum areas of space available to create one or more accessory dwelling units;

—arbitrary, onerous and inconsistent minimum parking requirements, including allowances or restrictions pertaining to tandem parking for each unit;

—arbitrary or inconsistent minimum or maximum setback requirements with respect to any garden suites or laneway housing;

—inconsistent application and interpretation of the OBC by municipal building and planning departments and their respective building inspectors;

—property insurers' insistence that they know more about electrical work conducted as part of such ADU conversion projects than the applicable ESA itself, further increasing the scope of work and cost to complete our ADU projects.

By the way, I have pioneered the conversion of single-family homes into three legal ADUs, instead of the typical two ADUs, using only the existing building envelope, within the province of Ontario, which I'm sure most committee members here are likely not aware was even

possible. And yet I, along with several of my clients and colleagues, have been completing such projects for over the past four years.

Furthermore, investors such as myself and my clients and colleagues who continue to create three-unit ADUs out of an existing single-family home detached dwelling are able to create three new housing units at significantly lower cost than the proposed new-build options contained within Bill 23. We can do so typically within six to nine months from start to finish, which is substantially faster than any similar new-build proposed projects, which require at least two to three years to complete, if not longer, given substantial ongoing red tape at the municipal levels of government.

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Based on my own personal knowledge and experience, to date only one municipality in all of Ontario allows for three ADUs to be completed using only the existing building envelope of a single-family home. Even then, the region for that municipality still mandates two separate building permits to be issued concurrently to enable waiving of applicable city development charges with respect to these projects, which results in further costly delays to the investors looking to complete such units.

These are only a few examples of the challenges we continue to face that are ultimately only causing further very costly delays and confusion among investors, building department personnel and other key stakeholders with respect to what exactly is the correct application of the Ontario building code, and specifically as it applies to such retrofit and ADU projects that we small landlords and investors continue to undertake. The numbers simply no longer work for the vast majority of any other real estate investment strategies available to us.

Furthermore, while the proposals made under Bill 23 are certainly constructive, they are nevertheless substantially overdue, as these should really have been implemented at least 15 to 20 years ago. Unfortunately, Bill 23 proposals are now largely way too little, too late to make any meaningful difference in our ongoing lack of affordable housing crisis, for the following reasons:

- the vast majority of small landlords and investors, most of whom our provincial government has largely taken for granted and largely ignored, but yet has nevertheless been relying on to almost exclusively provide the vast majority of new rental stock to the market over the past 40-plus years, can no longer make a business case to buy any new pre-construction units to rent out any longer, as doing so would result in at least \$1,000 to \$3,000 or more in monthly negative cash flow for any investor dumb enough to buy such pre-construction housing in today's market;

- our elected officials need to understand the different between real estate speculators and true real estate investors and landlords.

Real estate speculators exclusively focus on either organic real estate appreciation or via a flip to generate a quick profit. Speculators rarely intend to hold onto their real estate purchases for the long term. Conversely, real

estate investors and landlords are business owners and operators. They are more concerned with whether they can either make a business case for buying any new incremental unit of housing to rent out—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: —or whether it makes sense to continue operating their existing real estate holdings. As a result, they generally tend to hold on to their properties for the long term, unless market or highly onerous regulatory restrictions force them out of the market, and especially if they can no longer continue making their business case to hold on to their real estate portfolios within our province.

The concept of real estate price appreciation is mainly only relevant to true real estate investors and landlords insofar as whether such appreciation enables them to pull out equity through refinancing their existing properties to enable them to redeploy those funds to either buy or create more rental stock, which is a net benefit to new affordable housing creation in our province. Conversely, they can choose to redeploy those funds into other income-producing active businesses and investment endeavours that may or may not be within the real estate arena or are still within the real estate arena but outside of the province, which is a net detriment to the provision of more affordable housing within our province.

The current ongoing real estate market correction, as a direct result of quickly escalating mortgage rates—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize. That concludes your time.

We'll have to move on to Brampton Environmental Alliance now. Please state your name for the record and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. David Laing: Good morning, Chair Sandhu, and members of the committee. Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak with you this morning. My name is David Laing and I'm here representing the Brampton Environmental Alliance, or the BEA. The BEA is a not-for-profit organization. I'm their president. It's a volunteer position; I'm not paid to be here.

The purpose of the BEA is to help Brampton along its path to be a sustainable community. A sustainable community is a place that is healthy and resilient economically, environmentally and socially; a place where people want to live and work, both now and in the future. Beyond basic needs of food, clean air, water, a livable climate, safety, job opportunities and affordable shelter, people want a community that is vibrant and aesthetically pleasing, with opportunities for health and happiness. Nature and easy access to natural surroundings is a big component of human health and happiness.

Jane Goodall, the famous primate ethnologist, once said, "Let us recognize that the health of people, animals and the environment are connected. Let us show respect for each other, for the other sentient" beings "and for Mother Nature."

Achieving health and happiness is all about economic, social and environmental balance, and therein lies the problem with Bill 23. Bill 23 is not environmentally or

socially balanced, especially when placed in the context of other provincial government actions such as:

- backtracking on the promise not to touch the greenbelt;
- plans to re-carbonize Ontario's electricity grid through gas plant expansions;
- cancelling renewable energy projects;
- spending millions fighting the federal government's carbon-pricing model, even though many economists, including Canada's own Ecofiscal Commission, recognize carbon taxation as an effective and inexpensive approach to reducing carbon pollution; and
- opting for a nuclear "notwithstanding" clause tool to fend off legitimate strike action.

Under this bill, parkland will be compromised, natural habitat such as forests and wetlands will be compromised, watershed quality will be compromised, farmland and food security will be compromised, species at risk will be compromised, housing standards will be compromised—all this so that the government can say it is cutting red tape, taking bold action to provide more affordable homes. It's not balanced when the only people who seem to be happy with this bill are the developers and construction companies.

Yes, we need to add more people to the Canadian economy. Yes, we need to find affordable places where everyone can live. But we must do it sustainably, maintaining balance economically, socially and environmentally.

And there are options to the development free-for-all that this bill would create. Land use management experts, far smarter than I, say that we can accommodate the population growth for decades to come, staying within existing urban boundaries and without having to sacrifice greenbelt or environmentally sensitive areas. It would take a little more density and resetting expectations to counteract the demand for urban-suburban sprawl-type development that is not realistic, not affordable and not sustainable. It would take challenging developers who have been sitting on large tracts of land, sometimes for decades. In many cases, it's the developer delay rather than municipal or conservation authority red tape. I've been told that Brampton alone has over 13,000 permits waiting to be pulled by developers. I assume that means that the projects are ready to go except that the developer is waiting for the right market timing.

Let's modify Bill 23 to challenge developers, builders, municipalities, conservation authorities and other stakeholders to be more creative with the land, to encourage the creation of livable cities and compact, connected communities that will generate higher revenues per hectare at a lower servicing cost per hectare and facilitate smaller commutes, more greenspace, lots of recreational activities, and healthier, happier people.

I implore you to please bring Bill 23 into social, environmental and economic balance by allowing conservation authorities to continue to be an integral part of the development and review process, committing to protecting municipal green development standards that are at risk due to changes in the site plan process, committing to a

policy statement that ensures that there is no loss of wetlands in Ontario and, finally, providing resources to municipalities to address staffing gaps due to the down-loading of natural heritage roles from the conservation authorities and the province.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much for your presentation. We'll start this round of questions—

Mr. Graham McGregor: Point of order.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP McGregor has a point of order.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Sorry. I won't be partaking in any of the lines of questioning. I just want to get it on the record: Even though we disagree on the bill, I just want to thank David Laing for being here. I appreciate everything you do for our city. Thanks.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. That's not a valid point of order, but we'll take that.

We'll start the first round of questions with the government side. MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would like to start by saying, for the Future Majority team, I'm very happy to see you are here. I want to make sure that this is in the record. You are the future majority, but the most silent part of the majority. I'm very glad to see a youth group taking the opportunity to let us hear them. Yes, absolutely, you are the future. You are going to be affected by this bill and other bills we do. But again, I would call for you to take over your responsibility to let us hear your voice. That's why I'm very glad to see all of you here and I hope to see you all the time in every hearing we do. This is remarkable.

First, before I put the question, I would like to bring your attention to a point: The housing crisis we are meeting today has been going on for many years. It's not happening today; it's been happening for many years, and no actions have been taken. And now we are where we are, and we have to take some bold actions to meet your needs, which is: Very soon, you are going to be looking for a house.

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My question is: Don't you see, in this bill, any positive side in growing the capacity to be able to meet your needs in the very, very near future?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: First of all, I want to thank you for those kind words. It means a lot for me, and I know for the rest of the team it means a lot. We've worked very hard in the last six months, trying to gain momentum on proposing a green development standard that works. I'm from Mississauga. We've pushed the city of Mississauga to try to influence those.

I understand the importance of housing, 100%. I would kill for a mansion in downtown Toronto right now, sir. I'm a young person, and that means I care deeply about housing, and I also care deeply about climate. Those two things can coexist; I don't see them as enemies. And I'm clearly aware of the cost of housing, and I'm concerned about it. So are many of my friends.

Affordable housing and energy efficiency don't need to be in conflict. We can have both. Honestly, I think GDS is going to—it makes homes more attractive in a sense. The more that we implement these laws into municipalities, the better off we're going to be as a province. That's my total belief.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Are you aware that the cycle now from getting developers to take over land to the day the unit is available for sale is 11 years? Like, if you picked an area today, you are most probably not going to be buying in it, because you can't wait for 11 years to buy. Are you aware of that?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Sir, I'm not going to comment on housing specifically, because that's not my expertise. I understand there are much smarter folks who know a lot about housing and about the crisis that has been going on forever—since I was born, honestly. My focus today is on climate and on implementing green and sustainable design standards in the municipalities across Ontario.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: This government already did some steps to meet our net-zero commitments to reduce emissions according to the Paris accord, and we have an initiative of net zero. Are you aware of that, too?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I think it's awesome that the legislators are coming together and taking action on climate. I think that's amazing. You are standing up for the future of our planet and for the future of my generation and the generations that come after. I think that's fantastic.

That being said, this is an awesome extra step to take. There is an opportunity right now. There is an open window for municipalities to move quickly on climate. We are in a race against time. It's urgent that we take action. Many municipalities already have green development standards in place. This is something we can build off of what has already been done by the Legislature. It does not make sense to just end it there. We need all the action that we can possibly get. We need everything we can throw at climate from the government. We need all hands on deck. It's that important, it's that crucial and it's that necessary to our survival.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much. I will pass the rest of my time to my colleague Laura.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank everyone for being here, including the wonderful youth in the back of the room. I encourage your enthusiasm and appreciate you being here.

This one, through you, Mr. Chair, is to Felix: Bill 23 takes bold action, absolutely, and this new bill would remove, let me see, site plan control requirements for projects with fewer than 10 units. You talked about the complications in building and approvals and NIMBYism. In your opinion, how would this new bill increase housing for the landlords in your position and in your business case, given that in this bill up to three residential units would be permitted as of right without needing a bylaw amendment?

Mr. Felix Vortsman: The bill does not go far enough, to begin with. The third unit typically relates to a garden

suite. As I indicated in my opening remarks, I'm able to create three units out of a single-family home using just the existing building envelope, which means that opens up the door for, potentially, an additional two units on the same lot line to increase densities even further.

We're already required to upgrade water lines. If given the opportunity to increase that density further, we'd be more than happy to pay for the upgrades to the sewage lines as well on these properties.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: The challenges we're facing right now are predominantly at the municipal level. I'll give you an example: In the city of Niagara Falls, the requirements that they basically impose are totally NIMBYistic. They only allow a maximum of 40% of the main floor space as your accessory dwelling unit, which means that nobody in their right mind is producing secondary suites in Niagara Falls, from my perspective.

Ms. Laura Smith: Sorry; could you repeat that last statement? I just barely heard it.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: It basically means that nobody in their right mind, as investors, is creating secondary suites in Niagara Falls right now under the current restrictions imposed by the municipality. They're literally flipping the bird to the Ontario government, basically saying—and I've gone through this process with the committee of adjustments there, where there's a city councillor sitting at the committee of adjustments who clearly has a conflict of interest because he has stakes in a number of hotels in the area. This was back in 2017. Everybody on the committee of adjustments—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize for cutting you off. We'll continue that in the second round.

We'll move to the opposition side now for their first round. MPP Burch?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to thank you all for your presentations today. I'm going to go right to Ottavia from Future Majority. Thank you and all the young people that showed up today. It's very refreshing to see you all take part in this process.

I want to go right to conservation authorities, and I'm not going to pull any punches. This bill guts conservation authorities. It takes away their scope. It removes them from the planning process. It really sees conservation authorities as an impediment, and you, I think very accurately, outlined that conservation and housing don't have to be opposites. They don't have to be in conflict with each other. And it even goes so far as to require conservation authorities to identify land that houses can be built on, which is the exact opposite of conservation.

Did you want to comment on what you think of that part of the bill in terms of the sustainability that you mentioned earlier?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: First of all, sir, thank you. Again, I really appreciate the support in this room for young people's voices. It does mean a lot to me and to the team.

Conservation authorities do a lot of great work. I can't speak to their work, on specifics. My team's focus is on

youth voices in the province of Ontario. We're doing our part to make sure that climate action is taken. Of course, there are so many other fantastic organizations like The Atmospheric Fund that I brought up in my notes. They've written an open letter about GDS that we'd love for all of you to take a look at. It's things like that. We need all of the support we can get on climate, young people especially, and that's why we're here: to represent youth voices on climate.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you very much. Once again, I really appreciate you being here.

I want to switch over to Mr. Laing from Brampton Environmental Alliance. We haven't had a chance to speak yet. Same general question on the approach to conservation authorities: What will the long-term effects of that be, as an approach to the housing issue?

Mr. David Laing: The conservation authorities provide that element of balance. Right now they have hydrologists, ecologists—a lot of scientific expertise which is focused on a particular watershed or watersheds. As we all know, watersheds don't conform to municipal boundaries, so you have to take a look at a watershed in a holistic way. They provide that level of expertise and guidance to both the developers and the municipalities to ensure that the proper designs are done, that the proper elements are preserved to preserve habitat and other elements of the natural world. It is a give-and-take, and it's always going to be a give-and-take if it's going to be done in an appropriate way.

There may be ways of being able to speed up that process, but to eliminate that process would be a mistake because you then have people that either don't know all of the ramifications making the decisions about the land use, or you have to duplicate in the municipalities all of that expertise so that those people that are part of the planning process can still have access to that expert opinion or that expert information.

1130

So it's either going to be more costly or it's going to be deleterious to the quality of life going forward for decades, and there is no real way to recover from that.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you. I also wanted to ask you: Recently in the news we've read about the greenbelt, and we know that the Premier promised not to touch the greenbelt. And here we are, taking hundreds of acres out of the greenbelt for housing and development.

I want to get your general thoughts on that. You're probably aware of the concept of biodiversity offsetting, which we dealt with in the Niagara region, where they actually thought that they could build on a wetland and then re-create this wetland in another area, which was a preposterous concept. They're kind of talking about doing the same thing with the greenbelt.

Shouldn't the greenbelt be in perpetuity rather than just kind of at a whim when we want to build houses?

Mr. David Laing: Absolutely. There were a lot of very smart people that went into planning where the greenbelt should be. I can't defend individual parcels of land, but I have to rely on that expertise that went into it.

The bigger problem in my mind is that once you open up the door to say that certain parcels of land within the greenbelt can be repurposed for some other thing, that basically gives existing landowners in the greenbelt the hope that they may be able to sell their lands at a higher price to developers at some time in the future. It also gives developers the wrong message, then, that by lobbying hard enough, they can get additional greenbelt lands to be opened up. So it's a thin edge of the wedge which ultimately—

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Point of order, Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Point of order?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I believe that the discussion of the greenbelt is not part of the bill, so I would like to refocus our attention on the components of the bill.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. This is not a valid point of order, but I'll encourage all members to speak on the bill and focus on the bill. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm interested in you finishing your answer, since the greenbelt and conservation authorities and housing is all tied up with this bill—

Mr. David Laing: Yes.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Yeah. Go.

Mr. David Laing: I will just finish by saying that I think what it means is it opens up the door to other parcels of land being taken away from the greenbelt in the future, and it ultimately signals the demise of the greenbelt. It's that serious.

Mr. Jeff Burch: How much time do I have left, Chair?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Fifty seconds.

Mr. Jeff Burch: You commented on the issue of speculation and the approved housing units that are not built. Is that a problem in the Brampton area, that there are developments that have been approved but not acted on?

Mr. David Laing: I can't speak to specifics. Just taking a look at the number of residential unit permits that are available—and I know that Mr. Bucci said earlier today that it wasn't so much speculation, but I think you were the one that said that we don't have the proper facts, and so we really don't know. All I know is that I'm a businessman and I would—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. I apologize to cut you off. The time has come up.

We will move to the independent members now. MPP McMahon?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you everyone for coming in and taking the time—especially the youth. Wow, what a breath of fresh air to see you here today. Thank you for coming and missing your exams or study period, whatever you're doing. And congratulations. I sure as heck wish you were around when I was a Toronto city councillor. I could have used your help.

To Ottavia, kudos to you for having the courage to come here. It's very intimidating. I remember my first time speaking to Toronto city council when I was crusading for

the pesticide bylaw, and I was much older than you. And it's harrowing, so you've done a great job.

I want you all to know that what you're doing matters. Youth voices are so important. They're not at the table; they're rarely at the table. So I encourage you to continue to pick your passion and run with it, because it's your future and you actually hold the balance of power. So, great work—and I look forward to seeing you more often. Now to Ottavia: In your mind, why is it important to build sustainably, to build environmentally sound housing?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I appreciate the kind words.

So much is at risk. Again, housing is so important, but so is climate. Let's be real; we don't want eternal hurricane seasons, we don't want flash flooding, we don't want—it's awfully important. Many young people in this province care deeply about climate. I can speak for myself and for my friends on the team; that's why we're here—because we care, and we want to have a seat at the table. Youth voices matter, climate matters, and these voices on climate matter. We're paying attention.

This bill is getting attention, but, specifically, our amendment to implement green and sustainable design standards across Ontario is not, and that's why we're here; we want to bring it to light. We're paying attention, and so are thousands of others. This isn't going to cost a lot. It's not a particularly big deal. It's a simple amendment. We just want municipalities to have the power to fight climate change on their own terms. That's why I feel it's deeply important.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: We have the Toronto Green Standard, and it's the gold standard, a role model. It's one of the best across the country and, I would argue, North America. I was on council when we voted for it—as well as the Premier, who voted supportively for it. So we have this, but we don't have green standards all the way across every municipality in Ontario. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on that. Should we roll that out across Ontario, to every municipality?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Yes, 100%, every municipality that wants to get on board with this absolutely should. That's why we're asking for you to make that amendment, so that they can. Obviously, they're going to have that choice—if they want to get tornadoes thrown at them, sure. It's so important, again, that we fight climate change and that municipalities—local action is so much more important than we realize. And you guys, as provincial members of Parliament, have the power and the opportunity to change things, to fix things, and to save our planet.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Not only do we want municipalities that already have GDS in place to try to improve them—but also new ones that haven't gotten on board with it, we want them to step up and make that difference.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: In less than a minute: What worries you and your group, and what gives you hope?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: What worries me is lack of action. This is such an important moment in our country's

history and our province's history and the cities' and municipalities' histories.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And what gives you hope?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: What gives me hope is young people. Young people are so crucial to the fight against climate change. We're the ones who are going to have to be living with it, with the decisions that all of you make. It's so important. That's why we're here. We want to fight for that, because this is what we're going to have to be living with.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll start the second round of questioning with the opposition. MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to all the presenters for coming here and sharing your unique expertise and experiences today. It's so valuable to have young people here and becoming politically engaged, staying politically engaged. It's very important.

My first question is to David Laing.

I also see this bill as being neither socially or environmentally sound; I have some considerable concerns with it. I do have some concerns with Bill 23's move to make it easier to build suburban sprawl on green space and farmland, and that is twinned with the government's recent decision to expand urban boundaries—to require municipalities to expand their urban boundaries to allow for development on green space.

Could you speak to your group's position on suburban sprawl within Peel, what you're advocating for, and what your concerns are?

Mr. David Laing: We advocated that the region of Peel should have maintained its urban boundaries, which came up in front of regional council, I think, in May of this year. In fact, I delegated and spoke to that issue and asked them to maintain it, the existing urban boundaries.

1140

One of the interesting things is that there is a clause in Peel's urban boundary plan that says that it's going to maintain farmland for as long as possible. The irony of this—and I pointed it out to the committee at the time—is that we are dependent for much of our food imports on places like California and Florida, who are experiencing significant climate change that is affecting agricultural production, and that's only going to increase in the future. Here in southern Ontario, we kind of live in a Goldilocks position with regard to climate. We are experiencing, in some respects, some of the benefits of the changing climate. However, we're also consuming our own agricultural land at a fast and furious rate, and by 2050, we may have just finished developing the last acres of the best farmland in North America at a time when we need local food security the most. So we need to be thinking about the future of our generation and the next generation and making good land use decisions, because land is the only thing that we have. That's important.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for raising your concerns. I believe the Ontario Federation of Agriculture shares many of them.

My next question is for Felix Vortsman. Thank you for coming in today.

I have some very specific questions, so I'm going to read them out, and then I'll give you time to answer them.

If you're looking at converting a single-family home into a triplex using the rules that Bill 23 has outlined—you need to keep the square footage; you've got to keep the height, unless you get municipal approval—what does that typically look like? What would be the square-foot size of the new units, typically? And what would be the average rent of these units? Paint a picture for me so we can better understand it.

Mr. Felix Vortsman: As I mentioned, there's only one municipality in all of Ontario that currently allows this, based on their interpretation of the building code—which is a deficiency within the building code, as well.

What do they look like? It really depends. Typically, they look like some sort of a single-family, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s type of bungalow—and I've done these in every single iteration you can think of: four-level backsplits, four-level sidesplits, raised bungalows. It could be a ranch bungalow with a two-car garage—a two-car garage converted into a one-bedroom unit. The smallest I've ever done is actually a single-car garage that's 234 square feet; I converted it into a full one-bedroom apartment. From a rental perspective, it's definitely less than any new-build project—I predominantly deal, currently, in Niagara region.

So the size of these units varies based on the size of the existing floor plan of the unit. There are certain rules we can bend, certain rules we can break—and I'm not saying it's illegal or anything like that; I'm talking about layouts—and there are certain things that are rigid. For example, we're not removing posts that are holding up the house. The size of which—anywhere from 234 square feet on the smaller side, which is a single-car garage, all the way to 1,400 square feet. They are significantly more affordable than any new-build project, because it costs us significantly less to create these units than any new-build product out there, because we're not paying to put in a foundation, we're not paying to build out the existing building envelope; we're using the structure right there and then. It may entail us moving furnaces and ACs in order to optimize our layouts. Some of these units could be as small as 234—two-bedroom, one-bedroom, four-bedroom units. It's an untapped resource, and it is probably the very lowest-hanging fruit that the government should be concentrating on, because it is significantly less costly to build, quicker to build and more affordable.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for explaining that to me.

Finally, my question is to Ottavia. Ottavia, I'd love to know a little bit more about your group, Future Majority. What other issues do you work on? How were you founded?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: As I said, I joined the team not even six months ago. I'm particularly new to the world of politics, to political organizing and to youth volunteering.

Jared Klein, who helped me with being up here today, is phenomenal. I'm sure he'd be happy to follow up with you on what we do as an organization.

What I've been accustomed to is focused on GDS and municipal climate policy.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Is Future Majority a group just in this area? Is it national? Do you work on different environmental issues or just green design standards? It would be good to know a little bit more.

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: We are a national organization. I'm part of the Mississauga chapter. We have worked on other environmental issues. Our focus recently—since I've joined, essentially—has been on GDS, because the city of Mississauga has not implemented them, and we want them to be stronger on climate. The issue with Bill 23 is that it might take away that opportunity to have that call to action.

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

I'm very pleased that you're interested in this bill. It is a significant bill. These documents affect our lives, and I'm pleased that you know that—and we know that. It is extremely important that we work to change them. I look forward to seeing you being politically active in the future.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the independent members for the second round. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My first questions would be for David Laing from the Brampton Environmental Alliance. If I have time, I'd like to hear more about your group, but first off: Do you feel the conservation authorities have been doing a good job in protecting Ontarians and protecting Ontario lands, keeping them safe, over the years?

Mr. David Laing: Generally, yes. I think they provide that perspective on environmental challenges that are being faced by different development projects, and they can bring the right level of expertise to the table. The issue has been whether and when they get involved in a project and whether they have the amount of time necessary. I think it was you who said that it takes 11 years to get projects to development from the time that they're initially started. I'm sure there must be ways to cut that down. I am certainly aware of stories where the conservation authorities are either limited in their ability, just by the process, or excluded entirely—so that presents a challenge for them to be able to make their opinions known, with the right level of research.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yesterday, the minister mentioned several times that this bill helps to protect and manage wetland loss.

Could you please explain the impact this bill would have on wetland protections in Ontario?

Mr. David Laing: Right now, there's a provincially significant wetlands registry. I believe that there are something like 2,000 or more specific areas that are identified across a wide range of criteria, that identify the importance of that wetland and the ecological services it provides. My understanding of this bill is that it would effectively eliminate the "provincially significant wetland" designation and that it would treat wetlands no differently than any other—what is considered to be developable land. More

importantly, it would actually change the definition of “watercourse,” so that source water areas, which are typically wetland areas, would no longer be considered to be watercourses, so they would not be subject to the same level of protection as they have been previously.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What are your thoughts on building on flood plains?

Mr. David Laing: It’s a huge mistake—all we have to do is go back to 1954, Hurricane Hazel, and the number of lives lost as a result of allowing people to build on a flood plain.

We look at areas in Alberta where there were recent floods—Hinton, I think—and we see that where we allow people to build on flood plains, now, with climate change, a 1000-year storm is becoming a 100-year storm, and a 100-year storm is becoming a 10-year storm. That’s only going to get worse over time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. David Laing: Unless you’re going to do tremendous mitigation measures to prevent flooding in flood plains, property damage and loss of life is going to continue.

1150

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay, thank you very much.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We will now move to the government side for their final round. MPP Kusendova.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good morning, everyone. I really want to commend Ottavia and her group for being here today. It does take a lot of courage. It brings me back to my first beginnings in Parliament. I was extremely nervous during my maiden speech, so I can certainly relate to those feelings.

I also want to give you hope. By looking around this table, you see some members of the younger generation present here as legislators, and also to encourage you and your group to seek political office in the future to continue your advocacy. We recently had a municipal election. A lot of the councillors were running uncontested. So there are opportunities for young people to get involved, because I think it’s so important that the next generation, our voices are reflected within governmental policies because, frankly speaking, the policies that governments will enact today will impact us for many, many years in the future.

Since you talked about climate and housing today, I would like to focus my comments there. I was wondering whether you know or your group knows, what is Ontario’s contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I am not a climate policy expert, unfortunately. I would love to ramble on to you about all the great stuff that this province has done for the climate. I’m more concerned about the future, what we can do on top of what has already been done. There is so much at stake. There is so much to do. There’s so much opportunity for action on climate in this province. I 100% stand by that. There’s always more action that we can take, always more precautions. We always have to keep building, moving forward, getting stronger on climate.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Absolutely. But I do think it’s really important for us to also be aware of the numbers, and that’s what I like to educate myself on. Actually, Ontario’s contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is about 0.2%. When we look at our country as a whole, Ontario is doing its part to meet our Paris accord standards. Ontario is actually the third-lowest per capita province in terms of our CO₂ emissions at 10.1 tonnes, in comparison to the Canadian average of 17.1 tonnes, which is 43% higher. The Canadian average is 43% higher than the Ontario contributions.

Why do I speak about this? Because I think it’s really important to understand the context which we are in. When we look at the housing market and when we look at house prices and how it varies across different provinces, Ontario has the second-highest average housing cost in comparison to other provinces. So right now—and these are 2020 numbers—Ontario is at about \$594,000 for the average cost of a home, in comparison to British Columbia, which is the highest at \$736,000. Meanwhile, Ontario has the third-lowest contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. We have the second-highest cost of housing. So there is a disconnect. Ontarians are doing their part to lower greenhouse gas emissions, yet we have the second-highest housing costs. So there is certainly an affordability issue.

As my colleague has mentioned previously as well, the government is supporting net-zero emission standards when it comes to the building code, so in terms of quality windows, doors and insulation, as well as in commercial; for example, replacing standard lighting with LED. So my question to you is, do you have any ideas or additional policies that you would recommend to the government to consider to make housing more affordable for future generations? Because right now, many people our age are actually living in their parents’ basement, in their thirties. They’re young professionals, have worked really hard, and they’re priced out of the market. We have a housing crisis, and climate change is extremely important. So how do we enact policies that will keep both of these issues in mind?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: I can’t speak to housing in general. That’s not my expertise. There are people who have come here today and I’m sure in future hearings and past hearings who are going to speak to housing on a more in-depth level than I have. I understand there’s a crisis, 100%, and I’m glad the government is taking action on that. Again, my focus is on GDS. I don’t see it as a—I mean, housing, of course, and climate; neither of those things are partisan issues to me. I want to see all parties and all politicians standing up for both housing and climate, especially for climate. I don’t think this is a partisan issue at all.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I couldn’t agree more. Can you give us some examples of these green design standards that your group is speaking of that you would like councils to consider?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Right. So let me just pull up what I mentioned earlier.

You touched on this as well: better insulated homes, keeping heat and cool air from coming in, and that saves residents huge amounts of money; low-carbon heating,

things like that; cooling systems that shield residents from increasingly volatile and more expensive gas prices; heat pumps; high-efficiency appliances—those kind of things go a long way.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you so much, and thank you for your courage. Thank you to all of you for being here today, and I'd like to share the rest of my time with MPP Pang.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Pang?

Mr. Billy Pang: How much time do I have, sir?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute and 40 seconds.

Mr. Billy Pang: Okay, great.

Again, to the Future Majority: When I see your team, I'm so glad that you make me recall when I was younger, which was not too long ago.

Laughter.

Mr. Billy Pang: I was serving the community as a volunteer for vulnerable people like street kids, marginalized youth, cage-home seniors. They are all being challenged in the community, right?

I still remember 10 years ago, I was sitting at your seat at the hearing to present to the MPPs. Now I'm here. My feeling when I was younger was, "Okay, if I could be one of the legislators, I would try my best to make people live happier and healthier." Now I'm here listening to your presentation.

I loved your initiatives for taking care of the environment, but we have to deal with, as you mentioned, a lot of issues happening at the same time, no matter the environment and also the housing crisis.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): One minute left.

Mr. Billy Pang: So can you expand a little bit, because when we are dealing with so many issues—in your opinion, how can we help to get you a home, a place called home, earlier, faster and affordable?

Ms. Ottavia Paluch: Again, sir, I can't speak to housing. My focus is on climate. My team's focus is on climate, initiating and implementing green and sustainable development and design standards across Ontario. Housing is not my thing, unfortunately. There are a lot of other smarter folks who can speak to that. I would love to see more housing, of course. Something has to be done, but of course my focus is on climate and my team's focus is on climate.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Thank you. That concludes the time that we have for this round. We will put the committee in recess and return at 1 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1158 to 1300.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): I wanted to welcome everybody back to our afternoon proceeding of the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy. We will be resuming witness hearings. A note to the committee members: We originally had two presenters scheduled for today, but Debbe Crandall from the Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition had to cancel, unfortunately.

TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): That leaves us with our witness here today from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Could you please state your name for the record and then give your presentation? You have seven minutes. Thank you.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you. My name is John MacKenzie. I'm the CEO of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Thank you, John. You've got seven minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you and good afternoon. As I understand, it's Acting Chair McGregor—

Interjection.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Oh, now Acting Chair Pang? Okay, wonderful.

Good afternoon, Chair, and members of the committee. I really wanted to first say thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the committee today. As was mentioned, I am the CEO of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. It is the largest conservation authority in Ontario. I am responsible for the administration of that organization. We are a valued partner to the province and the communities we serve in the greater Toronto area. Since 1957, TRCA has been our region's first line of defence against natural hazards, providing vital programs and services that promote public health and safety, and protect people and properties, for the 21 municipalities who value and count on our support on a daily basis.

Our jurisdiction includes almost five million people, more than 10% of Canada's population, spread across nine watersheds from Mississauga, Brampton—where we're sitting today—and Caledon, going up north of Highway 9 into Mono and Adj-Tos, all the way over to Ajax and Uxbridge in the east, including all of the city of Toronto, all of Markham and large portions of Peel, York and Durham regions. And this includes the Etobicoke Creek watershed that we're on here today in Brampton.

In Brampton, in this part of the Etobicoke Creek, just as an example of what we do: TRCA is working with the city of Brampton and the region of Peel and stakeholders, including the province and the federal government, to daylight—to re-expose—streams that have been previously piped; to restore those streams; to protect new infrastructure and upgrade old infrastructure; to flood-protect downtown Brampton through our joint city and TRCA Riverwalk Project, which is a city-building project that will bring new major mixed-use developments, including thousands of units of housing into this urban growth centre and mobility hub.

We are doing this work with the provincial agencies, with the industry stakeholders and municipalities all across the GTA, and we work very well with them in a concerted effort to make things happen. We work to help realize housing, while protecting the environment and defensively protecting our communities from the hazards

that are upon us due to increasingly more extreme weather events.

With respect to this bill and proposed regulatory changes, TRCA is supportive of some of the streamlining provisions of the bill related to the CA Act, and we are actively working already to implement them or measures related to that. As a member of the conservation authorities working group, I and our representatives on the group from TRCA have worked with municipalities, the industry representatives and other CA representatives with the provincial team, under Minister Piccini at the time, to bring forward recommendations on regulations and to make positive changes. We would ask to be engaged again to help shape the regulations that are accompanying and running parallel to this bill to help make them better and to help make them pragmatic and to achieve our shared objectives.

Specific to the conservation authority provisions in this bill, TRCA has four specific requests for the committee today, and this would involve either the removal or amendments of certain clauses, which, if not removed or amended, will, in my professional planning opinion based on 30 years of experience working in the GTA, unequivocally create risks to our communities, impact the environment negatively, and frustrate growth and development by removing capacity from our municipalities in a time when the municipalities and industry need us most. Provincial agencies need us, now more than ever, to work together to make housing opportunities happen in the GTHA, and also to defensively protect our communities in this climate change crisis.

So request number 1 of these four—if you could please refer to pages 4 and 5 of my slide deck—is simple: Please remove subsection 3(2), on section 21.1.1(1.1), and subsection 4(2) of the bill, which restrict conservation authorities—restrict us—from providing vital services, including reviewing and commenting on proposals or applications under prescribed acts. This includes the Planning Act, the Environmental Assessment Act and other acts.

Or you can also amend it. Our municipalities want us to do this work, but you could also amend it to say, “unless there is an agreement with the municipality or infrastructure provider.” We have such agreements in place. Our municipalities want us to do this work, so please let them work with us, and continue to work with us, to do this work that we do for the province. We do this for Metrolinx. We do this for Waterfront Toronto. We do this for provincial agencies. Please let them continue to work with us. There are a lot of reasons for this. Without us at the table, there will be a major logjam in permissions in the GTA, which will actually run counter to the intent of this bill.

There are over 1,200 planning review permits every year. There are over 1,500-plus Conservation Authorities Act permits. There are over 500 EA infrastructure-related reviews that we do on behalf of our municipal partners—very important.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Forty-six seconds.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Request number 2: We strongly recommend that the government retain “pollution” and

“conservation of land,” so we can continue to protect provincial interests like wetlands and natural hazards from impact.

Request number 3—and please see page 7 of my presentation: We want to make sure that we have sufficient opportunity to review and comment on recommended conditions of approval, and if that takes place, we could potentially work on this amendment.

Request number 4: We want to make sure that there are some criteria added for when the minister can impose a freeze, and we want to have some maximum periods and to make sure that COLA, cost-of-living allowances, are protected for it.

Chair and members of the committee, I greatly appreciate you listening to my presentation, and I implore you to make these changes—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Time is up.

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Thank you for your presentation.

For this round of questions, we will start with the official opposition. Ms. Bell?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I’d just like to start off by saying thank you to John MacKenzie for coming and speaking today. Would you like to finish your remarks?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you so much.

In conclusion—and I was trying to be conscious of time—Chair and members of the committee, I think that we have a world-class system present here today. People from all over the world—I accommodate tours from Asia, Europe, everyone—want to see how we’ve protected our communities and saved the taxpayers billions of dollars from the impacts that other jurisdictions are facing due to flooding. We have a great system. Yes, we can make it even better through the work of the conservation authorities group.

I believe what we need to focus on—and I refer to my last slide in my presentation—is implementation, where provincial leadership can help us implement existing plans. We can work with the province to bring infrastructure, but then make sure the owners and builders have agreements in place to create housing where it makes sense. We need catalyst infrastructure, like flood-protection infrastructure that could be built on provincially owned land. The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre is an example of something like that, where flood protection works that would then result in thousands of homes being able to be built on greyfield and brownfield properties nearby. For 10 years, we’ve been asking for lands to be committed from the province to support that project. But that’s one example; there are many others.

But more working tables—exactly like we’re doing on the waterfront; exactly like what we’ve done in some of our other communities—involving the province, involving all stakeholders: We can make great things happen together, if we focus on implementation, but we do have to amend some of these provisions in this bill, to make sure that happens in a way that makes sense for the greater Toronto area.

Thank you so much for the question. I'm happy to answer any other questions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Mr. MacKenzie, for coming in and providing a very practical and specific document that outlines the recommended changes, in amendment form, to this document, and also for your very clear request that your organization would like to be involved in the regulation-setting process so that this bill can be as good as it can be to protect our natural environment and protect people from flooding and extreme weather events. It makes a lot of sense to me, so thank you.

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I also share your concern, and I also firmly believe that Ontario can build the homes that we need and meet our growth and job targets while also protecting our natural environment.

One of the arguments I hear is that conservation authorities and municipalities do similar work and that municipalities can take on some of the responsibilities that conservation authorities already do. What's your response to that argument?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you for the question. I think we have done a great deal of work with the conservation authorities working group under Minister Piccini to help identify and streamline opportunities for more efficiencies. I think, already, there's good work under way. I know the memorandums of understanding that this government, through legislation, has prescribed conservation authorities and municipalities to enter into, related to development reviews, will further stipulate and make that even better in terms of streamlining.

I would say that right now it works quite well in the greater Toronto area. I hear from the industry stakeholders. TRCA has a BILD industry stakeholder working group that actually advances updates to policies and frameworks, and we collaborate together. I hear that in the greater Golden Horseshoe there's actually quite a good system right now.

We are looking to perhaps share some of that best practice with others. We have fairly sophisticated protocols and timelines in place. We have pre-application consultation meetings that happen, as an example, with the development industry at the outset of a project to make sure that we scope the right studies and make sure everyone is on the right track from the beginning, and I think that is also another important part of all of this. We need to know and the industry needs to know exactly what's required, as early as possible, so we can all achieve certainty to create the mixed-use housing projects and all the other great employment projects that are making this region so vibrant.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. If this bill goes ahead and is implemented as planned, how will it affect Toronto and its region?

Mr. John MacKenzie: In my professional planning opinion, I feel it will create undue risk in certain areas. I really feel that. It's just something that may have not been thought through in putting the bill together, that there is a great reliance by our municipalities—in particular the

near-905 municipalities. They do not have the capacity within their planning departments, within their development engineering departments, at this point in time. It speaks a little bit to your earlier question. They don't have the specialized expertise, they don't have the cross-watershed modelling and they don't have this information to look on a watershed basis to determine that if something happens up in the north end in Whitchurch-Stouffville, it's going to impact Markham, potentially, and Unionville, but that it's also going to impact the city of Toronto at the mouth of the Rouge River at Lake Ontario, and then eventually impact Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence Seaway. We have this information. We have this data. We can model it. We can provide that expert advice.

But it also relates to natural heritage. That's another important component of this. We have, since 1957, accumulated incredible scientific information about the bio-region that we live in and work in. That information can be leveraged to make sure that the best scientific and policy information is brought forward to help get to a solution quickly.

I think, to your question, that's what is a real issue.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Mr. John MacKenzie: There isn't that expertise within our municipalities. Some, like the city of Toronto, may have some environmental planning folks working on green design standards—and they're great. But we take our expertise and put it into those valleys that we own and are managed by the city and that we work together on, and the watersheds, to make sure that we bring that technical expertise, working on hazards and extreme weather events, and we bring that to bear.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you. I certainly don't want a situation where thousands and thousands of homeowners and renters are finding that their basement is flooded because there wasn't appropriate water management and conservation management done at a higher level by municipalities and authorities. Thank you so much for your time.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Thank you. This round is for the independent member. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you so much for coming in. It's great to have your presentation and to hear your thoughtful expertise and knowledge from over the years.

I have way too many questions for you, but I'll try to be quick. We already talked about the expertise in the municipalities, so I won't go there.

What parts of this bill are you most concerned about, in terms of potential risk and damage to the environment?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: I'm most concerned about two major areas. The first one that I laid out was the restriction that is proposed for us in working with our municipal partners. Currently, we have agreements with our municipal partners, with parts of the province—and I mentioned some of the agencies, like Metrolinx. We provide expert advice to them related to hazards and infrastructure. For example, are they sizing the culverts correctly if they're upgrading a rail line? If

they're building a new piece of infrastructure, we make sure, especially in the valleys and our regulated areas, that it's done in a way so that it's flood-proofed, future-proofed and resilient to extreme weather events. If we aren't doing that, with the modelling and with the expertise, and if municipalities aren't allowed to work with us on the natural heritage elements of that and other parts of the system—that all combined is one interrelated system.

If municipalities can't reach out to us and we can't comment on some of these major projects, it creates risks that we're going to put the wrong infrastructure in and it's going to have to be replaced. If you look at other jurisdictions—for example, out west, in BC, they're looking at having to spend \$9 billion-plus on the recovery from the last flood last year; in Alberta, it's over \$5 billion they've had to spend. In other jurisdictions across the world, they're expending so much money to adapt to this more extreme weather.

In Ontario, there haven't been as many costly, impactful floods, even recognizing how much growth has happened, and that is because, since 1957, conservation authorities and this conservation authority have been out there trying to protect and make sure that in those flood-vulnerable areas—we're protecting that. So that restriction on our work is one of the main things that I'm concerned about.

The second thing is, there is a clause right now related to how we issue permits, and it would change the basis for that; it speaks to changing it to bedrock and another criterion, but the conservation of land is an important test when we look at issuing a permit. So if someone comes in and they want to develop something or build something, we look at how it impacts lands—and when I say that, that includes wetlands, that includes forests and functions around the wetland. So if that test of conservation of land is taken out of the test for issuing a permit or reviewing a permit, that becomes a problem, because there is no other substitute for that. We are tasked with protecting wetlands, but if you take away conservation of land from the test, the wetland—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Mr. John MacKenzie: —could be in jeopardy, and the wetland could be potentially removed. So that other one is important. On pollution, I would be okay—and I've suggested that it could be sedimentation, it could be something else related to the type of pollution. It's usually water-related or erosion-related pollution. But on conservation of land—the removal of that is a very, very concerning thing to myself and to other conservation authorities across Ontario.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Does this bill keep you up at night?

Mr. John MacKenzie: If it's not amended, it will keep me up at night, partially because there are so many of our dedicated people in our conservation authority and I want to make sure that—and I actually agree with the intent of streamlining our review processes. I agree with elements of the bill that will help make it more transparent for us to

do our work. I'm fine with that. But I am concerned about someone not getting the right advice—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Time is up. Thank you.

This round is for the government. MPP Thanigasalam.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you, John, for being here and for your presentation.

One of the biggest challenges that we have heard about and want to try to overcome is the NIMBYism. "Not in my backyard" politics is continuing throughout this whole process; we heard that, and the Premier mentioned it so many times as well. There is a consensus that we need to get more housing built in Ontario. However, that attitude coming from local municipalities or stakeholders is happening throughout the province, not just in the GTHA.

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What do you think we can do to streamline the process to get shovels in the ground faster? We have a target to meet: 1.5 million houses in the next decade. Do you think this bill would streamline the process to get the shovels in the ground as soon as possible?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: Thank you again for the question.

I believe there are elements of this bill that will help streamline the process. I do think, though, that the implementing regulations need to benefit from the input of experts. I mentioned the conservation authorities working group because it includes representation from BILD, it includes representation from CAs that are working in this field, it includes representation from municipalities and other stakeholders—the agricultural sector; for other parts of Ontario, that's a bigger issue. But in the GTA and everything, I think a smaller working group related to that or a subgroup of the conservation authorities working group could help to refine some of that, to help with that.

On NIMBYism: One of the things that I have found in my career, in trying to do a lot of intensification—I was a project manager for the West Don Lands project, where we built a flood-protection landform and increased density to help achieve the Pan Am village, when I was working for the province, with Ontario Realty Corp. and then Infrastructure Ontario. One of the things that I found is that making science understandable for people, as to why we're doing this, how important the benefits of housing in this location are versus putting it in another location which is going to result in additional fossil fuels and additional impacts to the environment—I think that's really important.

Conservation authorities work with municipalities to bring science to the table, to explain the benefits of certain projects. We are partners in infrastructure with the city of Brampton here, but all across the GTA, we work with our municipalities to bring science, to explain projects. In Scarborough, for example, some people didn't want the waterfront trail to go behind their houses, but we explained that if we do it the right way, it will be a net ecological benefit and a public benefit for the citizens and for the environment. So there's some explanation of science—I think that's part of it. But I think the bill can bring some

sites—they can perhaps make them shovel-ready a little bit quicker. But the regulations have to be right, because there are other parts of the bill that could be, if not amended, quite damaging, and they could actually, unfortunately, run counter to the intent of the legislation.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: We all agree that there is a housing crisis. More new Canadians are going to come to Canada, from the federal government's new announcement of 500,000 per year—as the Premier mentioned recently, 60% of those people are going to come to the GTA. So the crisis is across regions, but when it comes to bigger cities, we have to take action pretty soon.

In your opinion, what changes are most helpful for increasing the supply and especially the attainability of housing?

Mr. John MacKenzie: At this point in time, I think what is helpful are some provisions related to timing that we've talked about and which also were included in Bill 109, to make sure that all of the partners in the process are working together in a concerted manner, with some deadlines. Some of the timelines are very challenging, based on information—and I do believe that this bill and even Bill 109 implementation could benefit from making sure that all of the right information is provided by the development industry partners to the municipalities at the earliest possible stage so everyone can achieve this.

I have worked with some developers who come to the table in the GTA with all of the right information, before it's even asked for by the municipality. When I was a deputy city manager in Vaughan and planning commissioner in Vaughan, I had certain developers who could come to the table and get the approvals in 10 months, but other people would take 10 years, maybe 20 years, because they didn't do the right studies, because they kept trying to fight what was being asked for by every level of government. That's not the way to do it. Everybody has to come together in the process, and there needs to be as much information up front to achieve the timelines that I think this government is seeking. Everyone knows it's an urgent crisis, but we also have to remember that there are other considerations and provincial interests that have to be protected, like the climate crisis that we're all facing. So I do think that the timing provisions are helpful. I think it pushes everyone to get an outcome. But I think we just have to make sure that the regulations that come along and are implementing some of these things—are important.

I am concerned about DCs being taken away or being limited. Development charges help us do growth studies, so I do want to make sure there's some more consideration on that, because that is a very vital tool. As a former municipal administrator—that is something that you do need to help make projects happen. So I want to make sure that happens—that there's some reconsideration of some of those provisions as well.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Chair, how much time do we have?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I will turn it over to MPP McGregor.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thanks, John, for being here. I really appreciate, especially, you speaking about the need to streamline times to get more houses built. I don't think these issues exist in a bubble. The environment is obviously critically important, and we all have to do something to fight climate change. We also have a housing crisis, and we need to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years.

We've been hearing a lot about the need for uniformity across conservation authorities, about what they should do. In your view and the TRCA's view, what is the right role of a conservation authority, if we were to look at mandating that province-wide?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Thank you very much for the question.

I really think we arrived in a good spot related to the work of the conservation authorities working group under Minister Piccini. The Premier's special adviser on flooding said that we need to have a more enhanced role—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Thank you. We'll go to the official opposition. MPP Burch.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thanks for your presentation. I appreciate it.

What kind of consultation did the government go through, in your opinion? Did they consult with you before presenting this bill?

Mr. John MacKenzie: We have been working under the conservation authorities working group—that was really looking at how to implement measures under the previous changes that were made to the act. This bill came forward, and there were some surprises—I'll put it that way. There were some surprises, in particular, related to the limitation that I mentioned earlier about us not being able to work with our municipal partners.

Previously, the direction that we were working under was that we would have memorandums of understanding in place—and TRCA is ahead of that; we already have memorandums of understanding in place. We were updating some of them and actually building a couple of new ones for some of the smaller municipalities that are now facing growth in our jurisdiction. We got them approved by their councils in short order—and great working relationships. So we were on that path, and then this came forward, and it was a bit of a surprise because it was a change in direction.

Mr. Jeff Burch: So the government didn't consult with you on those changes that were a surprise.

You point out in your report that their own Housing Affordability Task Force did not recommend any of these changes to conservation authorities. And you even point out that the Premier's special adviser on flooding actually recommended a strengthening of conservation authority roles. Is that correct?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: Yes, that's correct.

Going back to my rationale: We've saved billions for the taxpayers by—I'll give you an example. For the waterfront and all the projects happening in the Toronto area, we're now suggesting an additional freeboard or an

additional protection in terms of an extra 25 centimetres, so that way, if you build infrastructure when there are high lake levels—there's all this advice we give; this is just an example. So we've been doing that, and the flood adviser said this is an important thing, to offset the costs that taxpayers are facing all across Canada. We are often asked by the federal government to be part of that discussion, because in other provinces, they're getting hit badly and the federal government is having to cough up—there's a great deal of funding required to help those provinces address the impacts. In Ontario, that's not the case—or it's less in Ontario because of the role of conservation authorities, working with municipal partners and the province.

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Mr. Jeff Burch: Do you have any idea why the Premier would have a special adviser on flooding if they're not going to follow their special advice? What's the point of having an adviser if they're not going to follow that professional advice?

Mr. John MacKenzie: I met with Mr. McNeil, and he was very thoughtful. So that's a question for the Premier.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm glad you mentioned the savings, because we often hear these economic arguments—and I think that when you delve down into this, the economic arguments are really against the government's bill. You pointed out that the conservation authority role has saved taxpayers billions compared to losses from extreme weather events. If they've saved taxpayers billions, won't diminishing that role cost taxpayers billions of dollars?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: I think that was one of my concerns about that one particular clause, as to limiting our ability to work with our providers.

We actually do work with the province quite well right now. We do work with infrastructure utilities quite well to make sure that, when they're building parts of a pipeline, they're doing it in a way that recognizes, "There's a meandering stream here, and it's going to potentially get worse and it could impact—and you need to build it the right way with the right standards." So that's some of the work we do, but there are other parts of it.

When Metrolinx is impacting a woodlot or impacting a forest, we've worked to try to—even though they're a creature of the province and we don't determine outcomes with Metrolinx, because they're a higher authority. But we do have ecological compensation. So if the environmental assessment says it has to hit that forest or woodlot, we make sure that there's a compensation program to help offset that loss.

So we do work to try to make sure infrastructure is done in a way that mitigates impacts but also is future-proofed to recognize the need to defensively protect our infrastructure.

Mr. Jeff Burch: With respect to a conservation authority's ability to comment on planning applications, from a business point of view, I thought it was interesting that you suggest that removing that capacity—you say at a time when we need to achieve certainty for development—we always hear from business about how they need certainty, and removing that certainty actually doesn't make sense

from a business point of view. Can you expand on that a little bit?

Mr. John MacKenzie: I'd love to. Thank you very much for the question.

There are many urban growth centres and mobility hubs in the greater Toronto Area, and even in the lower Don, in the eastern Broadview area, where Cadillac Fairview wants to build homes, a mixed-use community. There's the new Ontario Line station being put in to help serve that hub, but it's all dependent upon catalyst infrastructure, a flood protection landform that the TRCA has been advancing with the city of Toronto, as an example.

In Vaughan, as I mentioned in my submission, there's the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Black Creek Renewal project that will be a catalyst for major redevelopment in the southeast quadrant but will also benefit other projects within the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, exactly where you want to have density, height, mixed-use communities.

Similarly, I mentioned Brampton—right up the street, a kilometre and a half up the road, Brampton Riverwalk in downtown Brampton, an updated flood protection landform. There are many other examples.

When Metrolinx builds new infrastructure along the Concord part of the city of Vaughan, if they put it in the right way with the right infrastructure that's right-sized to allow for conveyance, it will get rid of the flood risk and will allow the achievement of housing that's contemplated through the minister's zoning orders and contemplated through all of this. That's why I view it as an opportunity. If we're working well with everybody, we can actually get through these processes and create certainty so that, when the right infrastructure investment comes in, you can get the housing if you have an agreement with the builders to build it upon receipt of the right-sized infrastructure.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): The next round is for the independent member. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's my second short round. I only get four and a half minutes.

I like how you said that you believe we can realize housing while protecting the environment. We've heard that over and over again in the last couple of days. We heard that from the amazing Future Majority youth, who said that affordability, sustainability and building housing are not enemies. I like that approach, and we're hearing it from everyone.

What are you hearing from municipalities in the GTA about this legislation?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: Our municipal partners are concerned about some aspects of it right now. I know development charges and the limitation on that is a challenge. I know that they are concerned about how they are going to re-order things and how different roles will change and how that actually will translate into practice. That's something I'm hearing about quite a bit from our partners that we work with every day. There's a lot of concern about costs that may result, related to the development charges and the schedules being changed. There is a great deal of concern about the potential for the minister to be able to freeze development fees. That's

something I've heard about as well. There is concern about our role being limited or removed from certain processes, because they do rely on us for the science that we bring to the table to protect the environment, but also to give them advice on climate change issues. We are in a climate change emergency. That has been declared by most governments, and that's something that they look to us for our scientific advice on. So I'm hearing a lot of concerns about that from our municipal partners, but I'm also hearing that they're going to try to continue, somehow, some way, working with us because they value that advice. I'm also hearing that from our partners at this time.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you have one piece of advice to us as we consider Bill 23?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Make sure the medicine matches with the diagnosis and we're not—my concern is that the intent is all good of trying to streamline and get housing built quicker, but we have to make sure that we're not actually going to disrupt a process that's working fairly well to create certainty. Yes, it can work better; absolutely. I believe in continuous improvement, but I don't want to create disruption at a time when we need some more stability and work to streamline—there has been quite a bit of new changes in legislation. There has been quite a bit of work to react to that.

I think what's needed—and I say it in my submission to you—is a focus on implementation, a focus on all partners working around the table, bringing in resources like the provincial facilitator, bringing in some new resources to help where there are land tribunal issues and there isn't a lot of capacity in that area and there are disagreements between landowners who want capacity or whatever.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Mr. John MacKenzie: That needs to be something that has to be looked at. The changes aren't by regulating or eliminating certain roles; it's in—the changes that I think are needed are by improving how we work together. I feel very strongly about that, and I think there are opportunities to do that, with a focus on the areas that we've already approved or have designated for housing. I think we need to continue on—but make those places come to life by agreements with industry, agreements with our infrastructure providers, provincial agencies, municipalities etc. So I think there's a lot of opportunity there to achieve housing.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): The last round will be for the government. MPP Grewal.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: First of all, welcome, John. Thank you for being here. We really appreciate you being here today and advocating on behalf of the TRCA, and we appreciate the great work that the TRCA does and that you do as well. Thank you for everything that you do.

As we know, we're in a Canadian housing supply crisis. When we take a look at the G7 countries around the world—Scotiabank did a study on this, and according to them, we have the lowest number of housing units per thousand residents across the G7 nations. It currently takes up to 11 years, from start to finish, to build homes. Our

core goal with Bill 23 is to streamline the building process. In regard to that, while keeping in mind the core mandate of the conservation authorities, what kind of actions can the conservation authorities take to speed up and streamline the approvals process so we can get homes built faster?

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Mr. John MacKenzie: Through the Chair: Thank you very much for the question; it's a great one.

One of the things that we are doing and I know our partners in other nearby conservation authorities are doing is—we have that working table I mentioned already with industry. We had our most recent meeting last week with the industry representatives for our jurisdiction. We work to focus in on priority areas. So if there are, for example, certain areas where we need to update guidelines or try to get interpretations from the province on guidelines, we can work in a concerted way to try to get those answers to make things happen.

We also try to bring forward new technology to make the process more efficient. With the development industry, we have been working on a planning application review and enforcement system. It's a new system to digitally ensure that we pass around applications and get them processed more quickly, involving our municipal partners. It's a whole IT enterprise system where we work with industry and they can track exactly who's reviewing what part of the application so we can work together on that. So that's a great example. We did ask and I have asked the province for some support on that from the streamline funding that was part of the Municipal Affairs and Housing announcement on that. It's a great opportunity.

We deal with thousands of permits a year at TRCA, working with industry. We've had three appeals in 12 years. One of them was the Amazon giant project that you heard about with the MZO, the other was something 10 years ago, and then one of them we've resolved with a condition. We get through thousands, and when I say thousands—20,000-plus permits in the last 10 years. We get through a lot of stuff, but we can do it even better if we work together with industry. So I think that's helpful.

Another thing that I would recommend strongly is up-fronting somehow some of this catalyst infrastructure that I was speaking about. You know about the Riverwalk project, I know, but there are other ones that—I think if we could work together, that would help make things happen.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Chair, how are we doing on time?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Four minutes.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Okay.

Mr. John MacKenzie: I think that would help a lot, if we could together come up with the right funding intake that helps put some of this infrastructure out there that will then help build housing—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Just for the sake of time, because we're very short and my colleague would like to speak after as well, I wanted to quickly ask: Based on the core mandate which has been given to the conservation authorities—when it comes to fulfilling that mandate, does

the bill still support that? I know there have been a lot of changes across the board because we're in unprecedented times and we want things to move faster. But given the core mandate of the conservation authority, if there are issues with flood risk, is the conservation authority still able to deal with those issues?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Almost. If you take my advice—and I ask that you take my advice, please—there do need to be some amendments. We need to amend the two that I first mentioned, in particular, that I'm quite concerned about. I think it's really important that conservation of land remains, so that way we can implement the provincial interests in protecting wetlands, which play a major role in flood protections. That's really important. The other one that I mentioned—

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you, John. I'm going to split my time now and pass it over.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I'll continue on, actually, with that conversation, because I'm interested in the core mandate, which is to protect people and property from the impacts of natural hazards.

You touched upon something, as well, that I want you to talk about because it was specific to my own neighbourhood, Vaughan, which is bringing forward—you talked about that. Supporting housing—you talked about bringing these properties of value forward and working in a complementary fashion with the government so that you could streamline things. Could you elaborate?

Mr. John MacKenzie: Absolutely. I believe there's an implementation gap, where governments have good policy directives but sometimes something is lost in translation. We need to be around the table—all levels of government and the developers or the people who are trying to build these housing opportunities out.

For example, in Concord, which I know you understand because it's nearby, there's a potential—it has been designated; I recommended it as commissioner of planning—for a GO station to someday stop there, which would connect with Highway 7. MZOs have been issued for housing projects. Unfortunately, there is a flood risk in that area. If we work with Metrolinx, work with the province, work with all the relevant transit authorities, we could figure out a way to upsize infrastructure, remove the flood risk, retrofit that community and make it a more sustainable, green and accommodating place for new growth and housing. But we have to be at the table. We have to knock it out together. We have to make sure that the development charges from the region and the funding from Metrolinx are focused.

Ms. Laura Smith: But just to circle back: In that specific instance, we are talking about the core mandate, which is to protect people and property from the impacts of natural hazards—like those areas that can flood—which is absolutely key and the necessary ingredient to why you're a partner.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): One minute.

Ms. Laura Smith: I do hear from constituents—you understand Vaughan—quite frequently, and I get quite a

few conversations from my constituents as to why they can't develop their property because of these limitations. We do hear from many individuals who are held up, sometimes for a very prolonged period of time, and they're unable to provide the necessary infrastructure. Can you speak to that?

Mr. John MacKenzie: It would be subject to the specifics of it. But I do believe that we are, as conservation authorities, put in a situation of protecting the provincial interests. A lot of our regulations and a lot of the provincial regulations and the provincial policy statement, the Planning Act—we are in the middle of it. We are the implementing body. There isn't anybody else out there that's protecting it.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Thank you. That concludes our business for today.

MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I think we've all noticed that there has been an unprecedented number of people who have signed up to speak at the Toronto two-day hearings. We have over a hundred presentations, including provincial agencies, municipalities, housing stakeholders, mayors, AMO. I'm very concerned, given the limited number of spaces that we have in Toronto—I believe it's 36—that there are many stakeholders and individuals who should be speaking to this very important bill who will not be able to.

I would like to move a motion asking that we extend the hearings by two days on Bill 23 in order to ensure that all the stakeholders that are impacted by this bill get to speak and we come up with a bill that's as good as it can be. It would be a unanimous consent motion.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): A motion is tabled. We'll take a 10-minute recess so that we can review the motion.

The committee recessed from 1348 to 1404.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Welcome back, everyone. There's a motion tabled by MPP Bell.

Please move the motion.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I move that the committee meet on Friday, November 18, 2022, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. for public hearings on Bill 23.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I think this is an excellent motion. I'm sure my Conservative friends are not afraid to work an extra day so that we can hear from people. There's an awful lot of people we haven't heard from who want to make their voices heard on this bill.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I think this is fabulous. I am so glad my colleague moved it.

We are a victim of our own success. We're very popular because people are passionate about Ontario and housing—the housing crisis, the environmental crisis. So why not give them an opportunity to speak? I'm hearing that we're well oversubscribed downtown next week. Why wouldn't we want to hear from other Ontarians who could give us sage advice? There would definitely be supporters of the bill who would be coming down. So why wouldn't

we want to hear from those people as well as people who—by and large, we’ve heard support for building housing, but people want us to do it right. Anyone who has advice for us—I think we should definitely do the right thing, be respectful of all Ontarians’ voices. It’s just another day, and that’s our duty—to listen to Ontarians.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate? MPP Bell.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The reason I am introducing this motion is because we’ve had an unprecedented number of people sign up to speak to us for next week in Toronto, and because the hearings in Toronto are virtual, it means that—it doesn’t just cover Toronto; it covers the entirety of Ontario, because people in Ottawa have signed up to speak, and we know the housing crisis affects them as well.

When I look at the list of stakeholders who have signed up to speak, they are people who would be impacted by this sweeping bill; they are people who are experts on the subject matter that this bill impacts. We have AMO. We have provincial stakeholders. We have financial experts. We have a CMHC rep who is looking at speaking. We have a mayor who has signed up to speak as well. We have a responsibility, as MPPs, to make sure that the bills that we introduce and pass are as good as they can be, and that can only happen if we have expert public consultation and we take the time to listen to them and make amendments so that this bill can be improved. It’s just one extra day, and it will allow some additional experts to speak.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate? Further debate? Are members—sorry?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I’d like a recorded vote.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Okay, it’s a recorded vote. Everybody in favour—MPP Thanigasalam?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I just want to give my two comments on this motion proposed by MPP Bell.

We are having adequate time to listen to stakeholders across the region, especially—I want to note that we’re just concluding our second day of these public hearings, and yesterday we had public hearings, on November 9, in the morning from 10 a.m. to 12, and also from 1 p.m. to—we heard stakeholders all the way to how many stakeholders who want to show up. Today is the second day we are going to have—and today is November 10—from morning to the entire day be allocated for public hearings.

However, when we go to next week, Chair, we’re going to have both in-person—like today and yesterday—as well as virtual, so we’re going to have a hybrid model to listen

to stakeholders, not just from Toronto, but across the region.

Today we are in Brampton, listening to stakeholders, and we heard from community members who want to contribute to the public hearings. Yesterday, as I said, we sat down in Markham the whole day and we heard from them.

As we move on to next week—November 16, from morning to evening, we’re going to have public hearings, and on November 17, Thursday, we’re going to have public hearings again. As I said, the public hearings happening at Queen’s Park are going to be virtual as well as in person.

Chair, the reason I’m highlighting these dates is because we feel like we want to hear—and the consultations will definitely help all members and our government to make sure that we heard not just from particular areas of the region, but across the region. That’s why we want to keep it virtual, as well.

So I do welcome the fact that there is a comprehensive list of stakeholders who would like to speak, and I’m looking forward to these presenters in the next week.

However, since we have these adequate times allocated, which are November 9, November 10, November 16, as well as November 17—November 16 and November 17, as I said, moving forward, is going to be a hybrid model. So I feel like this is comprehensive time, adequate time for the public hearings. Therefore, we will not vote in favour of this motion.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): Further debate? Further debate? Are the members ready to vote?

Ayes

Bell, Burch, McMahon.

Nays

Grewal, Holland, McGregor, Sabawy, Laura Smith, Thanigasalam.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Billy Pang): I declare the motion lost.

That concludes our business for today.

As a reminder, the deadline for the filing of written submissions on Bill 23 is 7 p.m. on November 17, 2022.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, November 16, 2022.

The committee adjourned at 1412.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

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Trammell Crow Company



Seaton Lands Portfolio

Key Information

Client

Seaton Lands Portfolio

Download Brochure

Location

Pickering, ON

Topline

Transacted over 400 acres of development land in the future Seaton Community.

Date

January 2016

Type

Residential/Employment

Size

424.7 AC

Sold for

\$162,800,000

Subject Property

This offering was made up of more than 1,200 acres of development land including 308 acres of residential land, 834 acres of employment land, and 56 acres for community uses. The properties were extremely well-located in proximity to the Highway 407 East extension, Highway 401, and the potential future Pickering Airport site. The vendor, Infrastructure Ontario ("IO"), had been taking these lands through the planning process for several decades with work that included negotiating a cost sharing agreement and applying for draft plan approval. This assignment was very high profile and highly publicized, which required a degree of sensitivity during the marketing process.

Our Role

CBRE Land Services Group was awarded the mandate to run the marketing and transaction process for this large tract of development land. The purchasers of these properties would be taking on IO's role in a complex cost-sharing agreement that included hundreds of landowners in eastern York Region and across Durham Region. It was essential that the listing team had a thorough understanding of the purchaser's obligations and the timing to servicing that resulted from this agreement. CBRE reviewed the agreement and engaged IO's consultant for several meetings to ensure we understood the contents of the agreement and any implications with regards to the cost, and timing of development. We developed a marketing strategy and detailed all pertinent information in a Confidential Information Memorandum. The lands were divided into a number of different packages made up of solely residential lands, solely employment lands, and packages that contained a combination of the both.

Outcome

We received a number of bids and engaged in lengthy negotiations with a national homebuilder for the purchase of all of the residential lands and a limited portion of the employment lands. Two of the packages were successfully sold. Approximately 397.4 acres of what was identified as future residential development

lands were sold for a total consideration of \$160 Million to Mattamy Homes, TACC Construction, Fieldgate Homes and Paradise Development. A smaller parcel of approximately 28 acres was sold for \$2.8 Million to the City of Pickering for the development of a business park known as the Pickering Innovation Centre.



Contact

Mike Czestochowski**

Vice Chairman, Land Services Group

ADVISORY & TRANSACTION

**Broker



Lauren White*

Executive Vice President, Land Services Group

ADVISORY & TRANSACTION

*Sales Representative



Trammell Crow Company

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STAR INVESTIGATION

How the Ford government's love of MZOs is increasingly benefiting private developers with ties to PC and local politicians

The province says MZOs are a vital tool to help build projects communities want and people rely on. Premier's office says "any attempt to link MZOs with political connections" is baseless.

By **Noor Javed** Staff Reporter

Steve Buist Spectator Reporter

🚨 **Mon., June 14, 2021** | ⌚ 17 min. read

The mayor's unusual request blindsided his colleagues.

In October, Vaughan Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua sprung resolutions on his council to approve three special zoning orders that would allow the province to expedite construction projects some of his fellow council members say they knew nothing about.

The developments would be fast-tracked through [minister's zoning orders](#), or MZOs, a controversial and blunt tool used sparingly for decades that is now being wielded with alarming frequency by the Ford government.

Two of the MZO requests put forward by Bevilacqua were for projects that could add close to 10,000 housing units, and the third for a warehouse on provincially protected land, normally off-limits to developments.

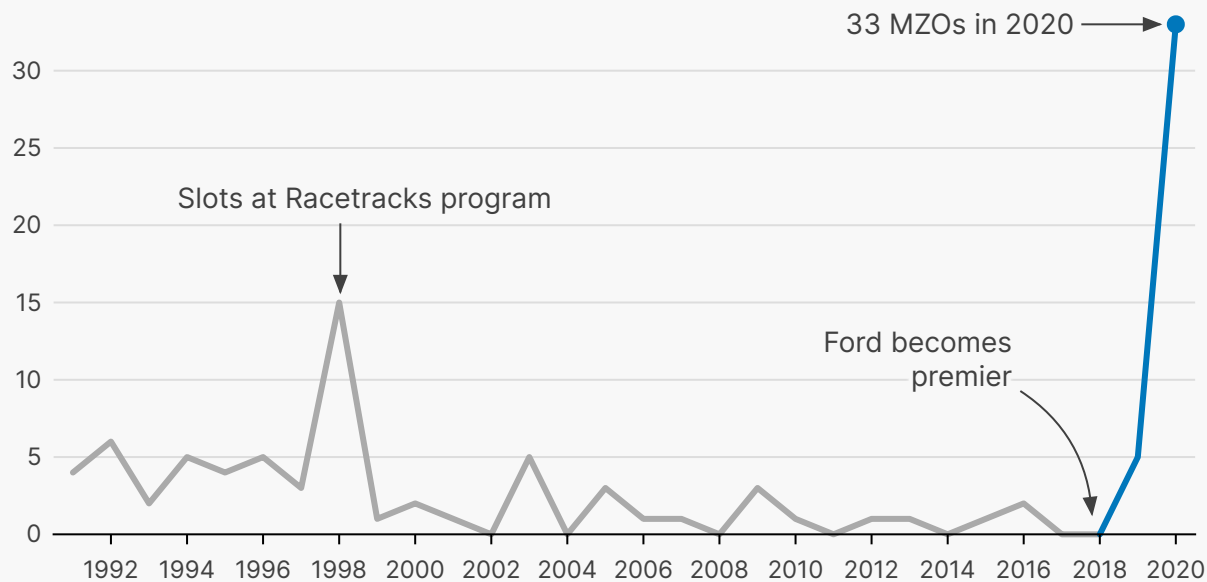
All three, as council members found out later, were associated with the Cortelluccis, a prominent family of land developers based in Vaughan.

"We have never done it this way," said local councillor Marilyn Iafrate, who unsuccessfully pushed back on the requests, asking for public hearings before making a decision. "No applications, no staff reports, no public hearings. Zero. It was basically like 'This is what we want. Approve it.'"

Once approved, the MZO request goes to the Ontario government. And with Doug Ford at the helm, it's high season for fast orders. One of the MZOs approved by Vaughan council last Oct. 21 was granted by the province 16 days later — a decision that can't be appealed.

The Ford government has handed out 44 permanent MZOs since 2019. Last year alone, it issued 33 — more than twice as many as the previous government did in 15 years.

MZOs by year



SOURCE: [ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE](#)

TORONTO STAR

Ontario's prolific use of the zoning tool has upturned a decades-old planning system that had specific processes, protections and transparency built into it, say critics of MZOs, including residents, local councillors and MPPs. And in turn, it has created a system that appears to be less about procedure but more about who you know.

The Ford government says these zoning orders are being used to benefit the people of Ontario. However, a Torstar investigation shows they are increasingly benefiting a select group of prominent land developers with strong ties to municipal leaders and the Ontario PC party.

Iafrate wasn't the only councillor who wondered what was going on when Mayor Bevilacqua proposed three MZOs.

"Why one (developer) over the other?" said councillor Sandra Yeung Racco. "Is it because they have donated, do we have to treat them differently?"

A little more than a year before Bevilacqua introduced the three MZO requests, the Cortellucci family made a \$40-million donation to the new hospital in Vaughan that now carries their name. They also donated millions to the city's first hospice and university campus, on top of tens of thousands of dollars to candidates running for local council and even more to the Ontario Progressive Conservatives.

"An historical evening for the City of Vaughan," Bevilacqua beamed when he announced the Cortelluccis' hospital donation at a sold-out mayor's gala featuring luxury cars on display and an opera singer. He shared a story about how his father, a newcomer to Canada 50 years ago, rented trucks to the Cortellucci family, who were also then starting out.

In attendance were local PC MPP Stephen Lecce and a tuxedoed Premier Doug Ford, who spoke highly of the family's humility and generosity.

The mayor's requests for MZOs alarmed a number of residents, too.

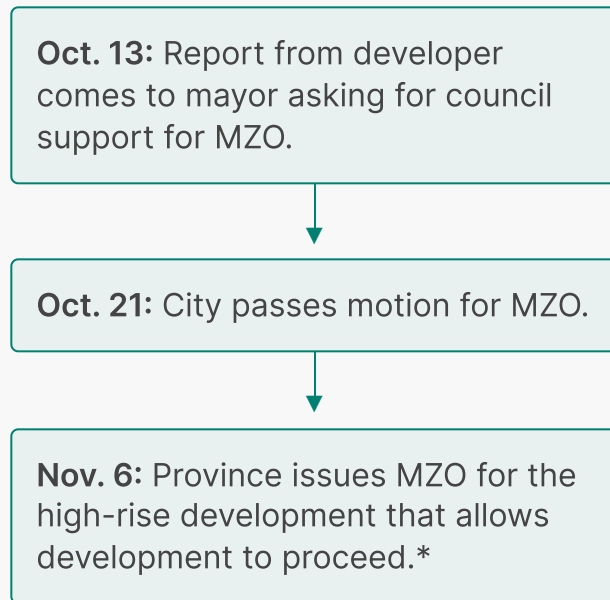
In February, they filed a complaint with the city's integrity commissioner asking why Vaughan "should endorse MZOs at the expense of public consultation," and "circumvent the local planning process and prioritize this developer's application, ahead of all other active applications that followed and abided by the local planning process."

The commissioner reviewed the "informal complaint" and said the mayor was in compliance with city rules. However, she said the process, if left unchecked, could cause council to become a "very permissive body," allowing its members to act in their own self-interest "rather than in the interests of the municipality or the public."

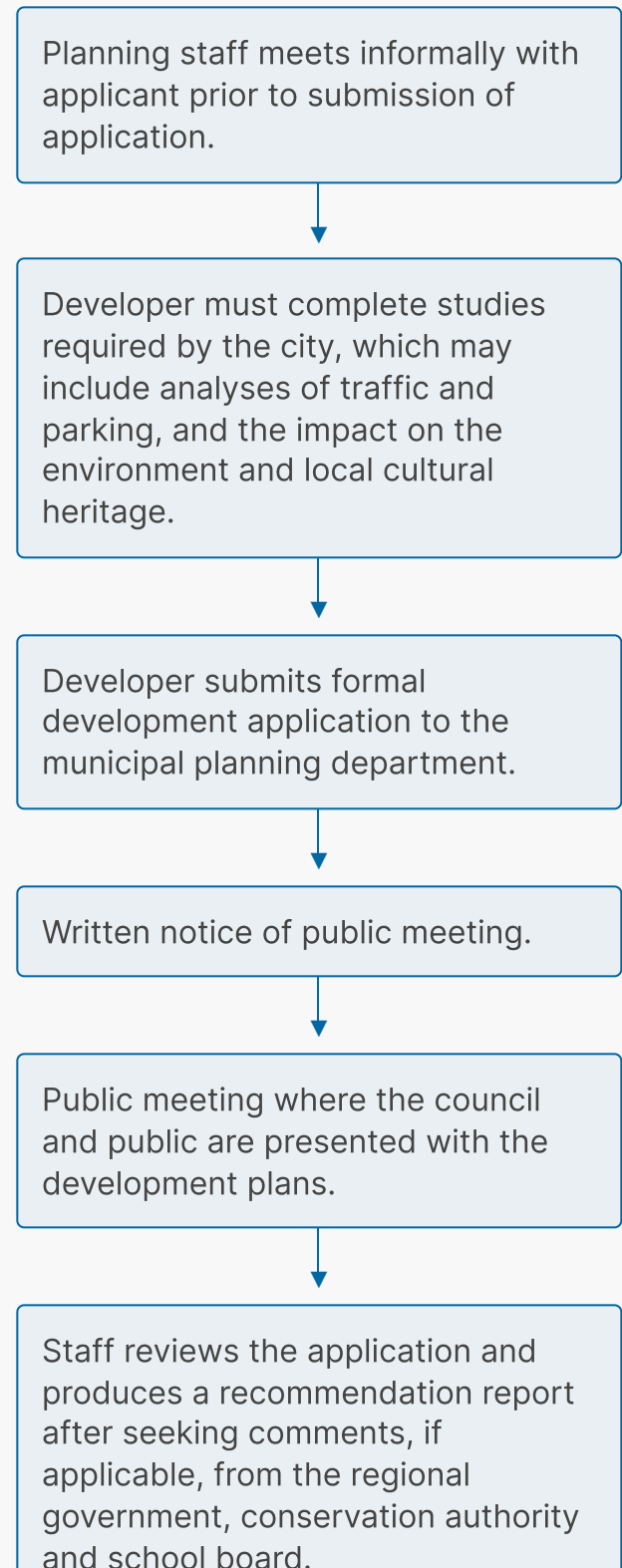
The mayor's request would let the Cortelluccis queue-jump almost 500 other applications before the city that were following the normal planning processes, the complaint said.

The difference between MZOs and the typical application process

How one MZO went from a developer's request to provincial approval in 24 days...



...while large-scale development applications can take 3-5 years to proceed.**



Vaughan council passed the mayor's request for the three MZOs, and the Ford government granted two of them. The third, which would see the removal of provincially significant wetland and forests if approved, is still pending.

It's not known if the donations played any role in Vaughan council's decision to ask for the MZOs or the province's choice to approve them. There's nothing illegal or improper about developers donating money to politicians and charitable causes.

Mayor Bevilacqua, who noted one of the developments aims to bring in needed public housing, said he acted in the public interest. He said he brought in the proposed MZOs at the request of his staff. "I am just one vote. If the council doesn't endorse it, it doesn't go anywhere," he said. "Ultimately, the province will decide if they want to issue an MZO. I don't make that decision." He also said that not every hospital donor got an MZO.

Council votes on project after reviewing staff recommendations whether to approve or deny the application.

MZOs take precedence over any local or regional council planning decisions. Only the province can hand them out or revoke them.

"We will never stop issuing MZOs for the people of Ontario, the people that need housing," Ford said earlier this year.

There could be additional approval of a site plan required depending on size of development and interest from council.

Despite Ontario's vast size, the Ford government has only issued MZOs in a core of the province that revolves around the GTA.

They have been used to approve a glass factory, giant warehouses, nursing homes and large subdivisions. They have authorized projects on provincial land, helped municipal governments add affordable housing and allowed non-profit groups to build seniors homes.

Of 44 MZOs issued in the past two years, 38 have gone to Toronto, the regions of York, Peel and Durham, and Simcoe County — some of the wealthiest parts of the province, where population growth is expected to jump in coming decades and land is most expensive. *** The MZO only approves zoning. It does not include a building permit, which can take 2-6 months for approval depending on the site plan, and any additional reports that may be required.**

**** This is a general application process. Specifics may vary across municipalities.**

SOURCE: CITY OF VAUGHAN REPORTS AND WEBSITE

STAR GRAPHIC

MZOs in Ontario by municipality



TORONTO STAR

MZOs are as old as the province's planning act, established in 1946. Requests for zoning orders are made to municipal councils. If a council votes in favour of the request, it's submitted to Ontario's municipal affairs and housing minister, Steve Clark, for a decision.

"MZOs are a tool our government uses, in partnership with municipalities, to get critical local projects that people rely on, located outside of the Greenbelt, moving faster," said Krystle Caputo, Clark's director of communications.

The government has emphasized that "every single" MZO issued on non-provincial land was done at the request of the local municipality.

More than half of the first 26 MZOs handed out by the Ford government went to municipalities, non-profit organizations or were used for projects on the province's own land.

But in the last seven months, zoning orders have been used almost exclusively to help private-sector companies and developers jump the queue and bypass the local planning process.

Sixteen of the 18 MZOs handed out since October have gone to developers, most of whom have connections to the Ontario PCs either through former party officials now acting as lobbyists, political donations or both.

Almost half of the Ford government's MZOs for private-sector developments have gone to projects associated with just four land developers — the Cortellucci family, the De Gasperis family, Fieldgate Homes, and Flato Developments, founded by Shakir Rehmatullah.

All four have made large donations to charitable causes, mostly in York Region. Fieldgate and its principals, Jack Eisenberger and the Kohn family, along with the De Gasperis and Cortellucci families have donated a combined total of \$600,000 to the Ontario PCs in recent years.

The four groups also donated \$358,000 to the Liberals and NDP since 2014 — all of it before the PCs were elected except for \$3,225.

Fieldgate, De Gasperis and Cortellucci were among those highlighted in a recent [Torstar/National Observer](#) investigation into the [money, power and influence](#) behind the proposed Highway 413.

The story, published in April, revealed that eight of Ontario's major developers own 3,300 acres of prime real estate near the controversial highway's proposed route, land conservatively valued at nearly half a billion dollars.

The Kohn family, founders of the Fieldgate Group of Companies, and the De Gasperis family teamed up in 2018 to donate \$20 million to the Vaughan hospital.

Flato has received five MZOs, the Cortellucci family's companies have been awarded four and Fieldgate has received three MZOs as part of a consortium. The De Gasperis family has received five MZOs — three to companies associated with Silvio De Gasperis and two to companies associated with another branch of the De Gasperis family.

The Cortelluccis along with Eisenberger and Kohn of Fieldgate did not respond to requests for comment.

Silvio De Gasperis, owner of TACC Construction, said the MZOs helped push forward much-needed projects that had stalled.

In a statement, he said the pandemic has made it especially difficult to move development projects forward fast enough. "The GTA is behind in meeting the housing needs of the existing population," De Gasperis said, "causing housing supply shortages and increases in the cost of housing."

De Gasperis said there's no connection between the three MZOs his companies received and his family's political donations and gifts to facilities and hospitals, which are "essential to strong and sustainable communities and are not fully provided for by the public purse."

"We are a key partner with municipalities and the provincial government in building communities," De Gasperis said. "We build communities, governments do not."

In 2018, Flato's Rehmatullah donated at least \$1 million to fund a new cancer clinic at the Markham Stouffville Hospital.

At the clinic's ribbon-cutting ceremony, Ford was standing next to the developer, each with their hands on the oversized scissors. On the other side of Rehmatullah was Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, co-chair of the hospital's capital fundraising campaign.

On March 5, 2021, Rehmatullah's Flato Developments received MZOs for two Markham properties.

Markham staff, dozens of residents, and five of 13 councillors had recommended against both. Staff called the MZO proposals "premature" because York region is in the midst of a comprehensive review of land use needs.

Like Bevilacqua, Mayor Scarpitti said there is no connection between donations and MZOs and that the orders were in the public interest, as they would bring in water and sewage infrastructure into northern Markham years ahead of schedule.

"We approved this MZO not because it's Flato, and not because they are philanthropic. It's because of the context of where this MZO was located," Scarpitti said, "and we saw that it would bring mutual benefit to the city, as well."

That same day, Flato received another MZO for a housing project in New Tecumseth. In 2017, Rehmatullah had donated \$50,000 to New Tecumseth's hospital.

And in 2019, Flato and a partner donated \$500,000 to the Whitchurch-Stouffville mayor's gala. The following year, Flato was granted two MZOs for properties in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Flato did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Iain Lovatt, mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville, said the charity was "arms-length" and not directly related to him. "Any donation...has zero influence on my decision making."

He also said he supported the MZOs as they will bring seniors housing into the community, and develop "walkable, complete communities, which is very much in the public interest."

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath described the Ford government's use of MZOs as "a disgrace."

“It’s pork barrelling at its worst,” she said. “This government has decided to use it as a way to provide gifts to their developer buddies.

“It’s despicable that they’ve come upon this as an opportunity to increase their access to donations,” she added.

A spokesperson for Ford said the developers identified have donated to the provincial Liberals and NDP as well as the PC party.

“Any attempt to link the MZOs with political connections to the PC party is completely baseless, misleading and not supported by fact,” said Ivana Yelich of the premier’s office.

Advocates argue MZOs help boost the economy by expediting housing developments and large distribution warehouses, as demand has gone up.

But while there are clear winners when it comes to MZOs, there are also losers.

Among them: constituents shut out of an already complicated municipal planning process and local governments compelled to endorse incomplete development plans that will permanently re-shape their communities.

MZOs have also led to the destruction of farmland and environmentally sensitive lands razed for development projects never intended to be built there.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority said 16 MZOs have been approved on lands that are regulated and contain valleys, floodplains or wetlands.

The government says it has denied nine MZO requests that would have led to development on the Greenbelt. It would not say how many MZOs are now pending.

Phil Pothén, Ontario environment program manager for Environmental Defence, said the Ford government is using MZOs “to railroad municipalities into swallowing up huge amounts of farmland and natural heritage.”

Vaughan Mayor Bevilacqua says it’s not surprising developers are pouncing on the opportunity to push their developments forward quickly.

“When you have a premier who is setting the tempo that ‘I want MZOs for economic development and the greater public good,’ then that is the ecosystem you are operating with...and people will access that ecosystem,” he said.

Torstar’s investigation raises questions about whether influence and connections play a role when it comes to accessing MZOs.

Take the case of Craft Development Corporation.

The company was granted an MZO on July 8, 2020 for a project in Lindsay that will include 500 homes and a 100,000-square-foot commercial building, long rumoured to be a Walmart.

The president of Craft Development is Carmine Nigro. Until two years ago, he was also vice-chair of the PC Ontario Fund, the party’s fundraising arm.

A year before the MZO was issued, Nigro was appointed chair of the LCBO by the Ford government.

Shortly after his LCBO appointment, according to a Globe and Mail story, Nigro helped organize a \$1,000-a-person fundraiser for then-Finance Minister Vic Fedeli, who oversaw the LCBO at the time.

Nigro donated \$9,930 to the Ontario PCs in the past four years, including \$3,200 to Ford’s riding and 2018 leadership campaign. He donated \$1,000 to the Liberals in 2014.

Nigro declined to comment.

Developers are also active donors at the municipal level of politics.

A 2010 study using data collected by York University political science professor Robert MacDermid found that nearly half of municipal election campaign donations for mayors and councillors in York, Peel, Durham and Halton regions came from the development industry.

In Vaughan, at least \$120,000 was donated by developers and their family members to candidates in the last municipal election. In Markham, they donated at least \$70,000.

“If someone gives you money, they are for sure expecting something in return,” said Markham Deputy Mayor Don Hamilton. “That’s just how it works.”

Getting an MZO from the Ford government has the appearance of a free-for-all.

“When other developers saw how these MZOs were being issued, they all wanted MZOs,” said Caledon Councillor Annette Groves, who has been critical of how the orders are being used.

A group wanting an MZO is expected to make a request to a local council, according to the process outlined by the ministry of municipal affairs. If the local council votes in favour, the request goes to the ministry and the minister makes a decision.

“We expect that municipalities have completed their due diligence, including consultation with local communities who will be impacted by the MZO, before a request is sent to the minister,” said Caputo, the minister’s spokesperson.

Beyond that, there is no defined process for a council to follow.

In this procedural grey zone, MZOs have to come to life in a patchwork of ways, often with municipalities figuring it out as they go.

In some municipalities, MZOs have been discussed at an open council meeting, while in other cases they have been discussed behind closed doors and then shared with the public.

Critics see them as a way for proponents to bypass much of the public process.

In Cambridge, a developer currently seeking an MZO for a one-million-square-foot warehouse preferred a zoning order so its project could be expedited and free from public scrutiny or potential appeals, according to a staff report.

Council unanimously endorsed the MZO request, without any public consultation. The MZO is awaiting provincial approval.

In at least four cases, there’s evidence the developer went over the head of the local council and straight to the province with an MZO request.

The mayor of New Tecumseth told the local newspaper the Ford government pressured his town’s council to make a quick decision on the MZO request that was ultimately granted to Flato Developments.

The MZO allows Flato to add nearly 1,000 residential units to the small community of Beeton, which has a current population of just 4,000.

Councillor Shira Harrison McIntyre, who voted against the MZO, said the project was “too big and too fast for Beeton,” while resident Sarah Marrs-Bruce said the small community already has problems with flooding “to the point that no further development was to be approved until that was addressed.”

Flato used the tactic twice more in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, when the company approached the council for two MZOs in 2020, including one for a residential and commercial hub atop environmentally sensitive land currently zoned “flood hazard.”

In both cases, just days or weeks after Flato’s applications for an MZO were submitted to the town for consideration, municipal staff received calls from the province asking for the council’s position, according to staff reports.

“Council took the position, (the province is) going to do it anyways,” said Stouffville Councillor Sue Sherban, who cast the only vote against both MZOs. “But then the minister took the position, ‘you approved it, so we will approve.’ So at the end of the day, both were trying to blame each other.”

Last year, Ontario’s NDP filed a complaint to the province’s integrity commissioner after a Chinese company, Xinyi, was granted an MZO in July 2020 to build a \$400-million glass factory in Stratford.

The NDP alleged there had been extensive collaboration between Xinyi and the provincial government for two years prior to the MZO, including an off-the-books meeting between Ford and a Xinyi representative.

Facing a backlash from Stratford residents, Xinyi hired a former Ford government director of communications as a lobbyist.

The project died soon after, Xinyi suspended its planned factory and the province agreed to revoke the MZO.

“Misinformation and falsehoods spread by small opposition groups have negatively impacted public perception of the project,” Xinyi said in a statement. “Radical insinuations were made, with overt hostility demonstrated in opposition to the project’s development.

And in one case, the province enacted special legislation to ensure an MZO proceeds.

In November 2020, Ontario announced an MZO to fast-track a warehouse's construction in Pickering's wetlands, land normally prohibited from development.

The project would create more than 10,000 jobs, the province boasted. The developer behind the warehouse was associated with a subsidiary of Triple Group of Companies, owned by the Apostolopoulous family, who have donated nearly \$36,000 to the PC Party and its candidates since 2014. They have also donated \$55,000 to the Liberals, all of it prior to the PC party taking power in 2018.

A month after the MZO was issued, the province introduced legislation that forced local conservation authorities to permit development on environmentally sensitive land if it was part of a minister's order.

When environmental groups challenged this law, the government tried to derail their case by retroactively changing the law through new legislation that said MZOs were not required to comply with what's known as the provincial planning statement — the rule book governing the province's land use planning.

It was only when Amazon, the anticipated client for the proposed warehouse, publicly disclosed it would no longer consider the site, that the plans for the warehouse came to a standstill. Pickering council voted unanimously in late March to revoke part of an MZO.

Developers and local councils often talk about how proposed MZOs will help increase the stock of affordable housing and seniors housing.

But there is no way for a council to guarantee such promises will be kept once the province issues the order.

Vaughan Councillor Iafrate said that in one of the MZOs the Vaughan mayor brought forward in October — a condo development near Keele St. and Bowes Rd. — there was a requirement for 10 per cent affordable housing in the project. Given the shortage of such homes in the region, Iafrate, who also ran for the provincial Liberals in 2018, felt compelled to vote in favour of it.

When the MZO was issued by the province in March 2021 — fast-tracking the project by three to five years — she said there was no requirement for affordable housing in the minister's order. "We can't force it. We can negotiate, but that doesn't mean they have to listen," she said.

In a normal development process, before council will sign off on a project, builders are expected to provide studies analyzing potential impacts on the environment and local traffic, and hold public hearings. Details of the development are often negotiated before final approval is given.

But MZOs don't have the same requirements.

The only material supporting one MZO request brought forward by Vaughan's mayor was a map and a three-page letter, written by the Cortellucci family's Cortel Group.

Eight days later, Vaughan endorsed the request to fast-track the development of a 20-acre parcel of land at the corner of Jane St. and Rutherford Rd. The council resolution was longer than the Cortel Group's request letter.

And just 16 days after that, on Nov. 6, the province issued the MZO, green-lighting the high-rise development.

With the MZO floodgates open, there is a growing ire among developers who have applied through the standard zoning process, which can take several years and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. At least one developer, Solmar, tried to bring its own MZO request to Vaughan council, but no politician would back it, saying they didn't know enough about the project to do so.

Vaughan councillors have asked staff to come up with a policy on how to deal with MZOs.

"The province does not take the time to look at each request from a planning process, they are looking at a higher level," said Vaughan Councillor Yeung Racco, who ran for the provincial Liberals in 2014. "What that criteria is...we don't really know. And that's a problem."

Racco said she voted against two of the three MZO requests the mayor put forward, only voting for the one that was adjacent to a development that had previously received a MZO. "I did so, because I believe in fairness."

She said that the planning process needs to be independent of relationships.

"I will not say because you are a friend, I will treat you better than somebody else. I will always look at it from a planning perspective: does it make sense, is it going to help this community, is it going to add to our community?"



Steve Buist is a Hamilton-based investigative reporter at the Spectator. Reach him via email: sbuist@thespec.com



Noor Javed is a Toronto-based reporter for the Star covering city news with interest in 905 municipal politics. Follow her on Twitter: [@njaved](https://twitter.com/njaved)

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found that the average time to obtain approval for a development application in the Greater Toronto Area ranged from nine months to two years. Obtaining approval through the then Local Planning Appeal Tribunal took about twice as long on average. MZOs, by contrast, cannot be appealed to the Tribunal.

Seventeen of 44 MZOs Requested By The Same Seven Development Companies

During our review of the 44 MZOs issued from March 2019 to March 2021, we noted that 17 (or 39%) of the 44 MZOs facilitated development projects by the same seven development companies or group of companies (see **Figure 18**).

Such a pattern opens the MZO process to criticisms of conflict of interest and unfairness given the lack of transparency in the decision-making process to ensure, and demonstrate to the public, that decisions are made objectively and consistent with the purposes of the *Planning Act*, the Growth Plan and other provincial plans.

RECOMMENDATION 9

So that Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) are not used as a way to circumvent the normal planning process in order to speed up development projects, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing work with municipalities to identify and implement ways to make the land-use planning process more streamlined and efficient while still complying with due diligence and public consultation requirements under the *Planning Act*.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

MZOs form part of the land-use planning system in Ontario as established in the *Planning Act* and are a part of the planning process.

The Ministry recognizes the importance of continuing to look for ways to further streamline the land-use planning system and will continue to work with municipalities and other stakeholders to identify opportunities to do so. Bill 108, the *More*

Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 made amendments to the *Planning Act* to streamline development approvals processes and facilitate faster decisions by reducing decision timelines for local planning decisions and making the appeals process more efficient.

The Ministry will continue to work in partnership with municipalities to identify and implement ways to make the land-use planning process more streamlined and efficient. For example, Ontario is providing up to \$350 million through to fiscal year 2022/23 to help municipalities lower costs and improve services for local residents over the long term, through the Audit and Accountability Fund (AAF) for larger municipalities and the Municipal Modernization Program for smaller municipalities. Both programs offer funding to municipalities to undertake reviews to find efficiencies, including streamlining development and planning approvals.

4.4.4 Process for Issuing MZOs Not Transparent

Our audit found that the application and decision-making process for issuing MZOs, as well as public communications about them, is not transparent. In addition, MZOs bypass public consultation and cannot be appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal. This lack of transparency is contrary to the purposes of the *Planning Act* and good land-use planning principles (see **Figure 2**). As well, as discussed in **Section 4.4.3**, this opens the MZO process to criticisms of conflict of interest and unfairness.

No Formal Process or Criteria for Issuing MZOs

We found that there is no formal or standard process that interested parties are required to follow to request an MZO. Ministry staff told us that anyone may request an MZO through any means, either verbally or in writing. Our review of documentation related to the 44 MZOs issued from March 2019 to March 2021 found the following:

- In 12 or 27% of cases, the MZOs were initiated by the province in order to fast-track provincial

Figure 18: Development Companies with More than One Minister's Zoning Order (MZO)

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

Municipality	Date Issued	Description
Flato Developments (4 MZOs)		
Markham	Apr 24, 2020	Permits a housing development (townhouses, apartments and retirement units) along with associated commercial development
Whitchurch-Stouffville	Oct 30, 2020	Permits residential (single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, apartments, townhouses), retail, office, institutional, commercial uses
New Tecumseth	Mar 5, 2021	Permits a 995-unit development consisting of five rental apartment buildings, 173 townhouses, 40 semi-detached homes, 297 single detached homes, a neighbourhood commercial area, a central park, trails and open space
Markham	Mar 5, 2021	Permits approximately 219 single-detached dwellings, 197 townhouses, 200 purpose built rental apartment units, and two parks
TACC Construction (3 MZOs)		
Brampton	Apr 24, 2020	Permits a housing development (townhouses, apartments and retirement units) along with associated commercial development
Vaughan ¹	Nov 6, 2020	Permits residential (single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, apartments, townhouses), retail, office, institutional and commercial development
Caledon ¹	Mar 5, 2021	Permits development of single detached homes, townhouse blocks, a high-density mixed-use residential/commercial block, an employment/office block, and preserves open space and natural heritage system areas
Conmar Developments, Fenlands Vaughan, DG Group, Lorwood Holdings (2 MZOs)		
Vaughan	Apr 24, 2020	Permits construction of a Walmart distribution facility and outdoor storage
Toronto	Oct 22, 2020	Permits a maximum of three buildings, one of which must be an apartment building
Cortel Group, Bracor Ltd, Crinklewood Development (Allegedly connected²) (2 MZOs)		
Vaughan	Nov 6, 2020	Permits residential (apartments, townhouses), retail, office, institutional and commercial development
Vaughan	Mar 5, 2021	Permits a large mixed-use development on lands near the potential GO station
Oakleigh Developments (2 MZOs)		
Oro-Medonte	Nov 1, 2019	Permits construction of an automotive research and development facility
Oro-Medonte	Oct 30, 2020	Permits developing an industrial park focused on manufacturing medical products and personal protective equipment
SmartCentres (2 MZOs)		
Vaughan	Apr 29, 2019	Permits relocating a Walmart for a proposed mixed-use development
Cambridge	Oct 30, 2020	Permits a mixed-use development consisting of a variety of residential (townhomes, mid-rise apartments, high-rise towers, approx. 10,000 residential units), retail, office, institutional, and commercial land uses
WDL Consortium: Dream Unlimited, Kilmer Group, Tricon Capital (2 MZOs)		
Toronto	Oct 22, 2020	Permits two mixed-use buildings containing 661 residential rental units (198 of which are affordable)
Toronto	Oct 22, 2020	Permits three mixed-use buildings containing retail space and 839 residential rental units (252 of which are affordable)

1. As part of a consortium.

2. Based on an NDP investigation.