

November 22, 2022

Toronto & York Region Labour Council
15 Gervais Drive, Suite #407
North York, Ontario
M3C 1Y8



Re: Agenda Item CC1.2 Update on Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022

To: City Council – Mayor and Toronto City Councillors

I write today to congratulate the new City Council, comment on Bill 23, tie that in with Bill 39, and support the City's request for 2022 funding from the federal and provincial governments.

On behalf of the Toronto & York Region Labour Council, I would like to congratulate all of you on your election to Toronto City Council for this 2022-2026 term. We look forward to working with you to achieve our common goals.

Since 1871, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council has championed principles which improve the lives of our members and their communities. Today, we work for justice in our workplaces, in our communities, and in our world. We have four pillars of justice: economic, social, racial and climate justice. Today, we represent over 150 unions and locals, and over 220,000 working people in every sector of Toronto's economy. In the recent municipal election, we called for a liveable city for all.

We have many concerns about Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022. Our concerns have been communicated to the provincial government, which you can read [here](#). To summarize, we believe that the Bill will have negative effects on affordable housing, does not focus sufficiently on densification of urban areas, reduces Greenbelt protected lands thus exposing us to more food insecurity and climate change risks, over-rides democratic processes, and is moving too quickly through the legislative process. We have called on the Conservatives to pause Bill 23 until municipal governments have the opportunity to respond meaningfully. We call on you to take the same position, and to fight to protect and create more truly affordable housing while protecting the broader environment on which we rely for food and climate protection.

We recognize that it can be challenging to oppose the Province on one policy front, such as with Bill 23, while at the same time relying on them for financial support. Yet it must be understood that municipal governments are not children who must do as they are told by the Province or risk losing their allowance. Toronto's mayor and City Council should be able to hold and legislate from different viewpoints while also finding ways to work together with the provincial government.

The case has been well made by the City that Toronto requires support from the provincial and federal governments to fill our \$815 million gap in 2022 spending, with much of it due to residual

and ongoing COVID impacts. The Labour Council is writing to both levels of government to lend our weight to the city's request for full financial support for this gap.

At the same time, the Labour Council believes that building a great city requires substantial revenue—resources that should be acquired in a way that is progressive rather than regressive. We believe that our aspirations and vision should drive decisions, not our budget. And we believe that the City needs to accomplish multiple priorities simultaneously. Toronto is a complex place, so the City must have the agility to address complex and wide-ranging issues. In a city where there is abundant wealth, this is eminently doable.

I look forward to discussing how we can action our vision for Toronto in more detail in future (including collaborating on a call for a new deal for cities), but in the meantime, I and Toronto's working families expect to see your leadership ensuring the city does the most we can to fund a liveable city. The city must take on its share of responsibility for fiscal wellbeing.

Let's return to the Greenbelt and local democracy issues: related to Bill 23 is Bill 39, Better Municipal Governance Act. **We hope that Bill 39 does not pass, and that if it passes, it is never used.** First, the Greenbelt lands must be stewarded for future generations, rather than used in ways that look like they simply reward wealthy political donors. Secondly, there appears to be broad consensus that it is fundamentally wrong to allow a small minority of city council to determine important municipal policies and programs. In any event, it is unnecessary to bestow these powers because there have been few barriers to the mayor winning key council votes on affordable housing in the past.

We call on you to send a message to the provincial government that you do not support Bill 39. There are other ways of showing leadership and bringing people onside, through real engagement, both at city council and across Toronto. We need affordable housing; we don't need attacks on local democracy. As you form a new and revitalized city council, we look forward to your leadership.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andria Babbington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andria Babbington
President, Toronto & York Region Labour Council