

Presentation to

Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy on
Bill 98, *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026*

Monday, May 4, 2026

Presenters on behalf of OPPI

Andria Leigh, Chair

Susan Wiggins, Executive Director

Susan

Good afternoon,

My name is Susan Wiggins, I am the executive director of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute or simply, OPPI. I want to start by thanking members of the committee for inviting us here to speak today in what I expect will be my last time appearing before a committee as I am set to retire at the end of July after 30+ years of advocacy, six of which for OPPI. Joining me virtually from the Town of Innisfil—where she is Director of Planning & Growth—is Andria Leigh, a Registered Professional Planner and Chair of OPPI Council.

We are here to speak today on behalf OPPI's 5,400 members, including more than 3,000 Registered Professional Planners (RPPs) working in municipalities, the development sector, and consulting. Over 30% of our members specialize in areas such as transportation, environment and heritage, public engagement, land economics, and growth management.

RPPs meet a high professional standard: an accredited planning degree, 2–3 years of mentored and supervised experience, mandatory ethics training, and a qualifying exam. OPPI welcomes about 200 new RPPs each year—capacity Ontario needs to meet the demand for housing, to deliver better transportation infrastructure, and to ensure the two are planned together.

Planning demand is driven by the need for complete communities—places where people can live, work, and access services. That can mean Northern communities needing housing and supporting infrastructure, or fast-growing municipalities like Innisfil, where growth management must be coordinated with transportation, servicing, and community facilities.

As planners, our role is to apply provincial policy and legislation in the public interest, provide clear professional advice to local councils, and remain future-focused as communities grow and change.

OPPI helps to enable the government's priority of building more homes and improving transportation infrastructure and we have invested substantial effort to streamline approvals, reduce avoidable cost and delay, and remove barriers to construction while maintaining good planning outcomes.

We are here to commend the government, especially Minister Flack and staff at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on Bill 98. This legislation proposes needed changes to two core parts of the planning system: municipal Official Plans and the development application process. OPPI has been working with MMAH staff, the Minister, and partner associations to help shape these reforms.

Andria

We support simplifying Official Plans through a standardized table of contents and schedules, and a standardized set of land-use designations. Done well, this can improve consistency and predictability for municipalities, applicants, and the public, and support a more data-driven planning system.

We have advised the ministry to pilot these changes and manage transition timing carefully, recognizing that municipalities update Official Plans on different cycles and with varying capacity.

Given the scale of change and municipal impact, Official Plan and land-use designation reform should be delivered primarily through **guidance**, not legislation or regulation. Overly detailed, inflexible standards risk limiting documents that must remain strategic, enabling, and adaptable.

OPPI also worked with MMAH on the reports municipalities may request for a **complete application**. We support the Bill 98 approach of distinguishing **core** studies that are commonly required from **contingent** studies that should only be requested where site-specific conditions justify them. This helps focus effort, reduce unnecessary work, and keep applications moving.

As a next step, OPPI recommends adding to the prescribed professions list for certain reports, those who routinely prepare required studies, including *RPPs*, *archaeologists*, *landscape architects*, and *architects* to further reduce delays.

Additionally, we encourage the province to issue **standardized terms of reference**—as guidance—for the most common studies, with flexibility for municipalities to tailor where local conditions warrant. OPPI would be pleased to assist, drawing on best practices already in use.

In the balance of our time, we will briefly highlight several additional items in Bill 98 where OPPI is supportive, and would like to work with the Ministry on implementation side of these items:

- We support retaining **secondary plans**. They remain an essential area-based tool to coordinate growth and infrastructure and to bridge Official Plan policy and implementation tools like zoning.

- We strongly recommend maintaining **site plan control**, while modernizing definitions, scope, and timing. OPPI members have practical reform ideas and look forward to working with MMAH to improve this tool.

We commend the Province for producing an updated **Projection Methodology Guideline**. It will be important in Official Plan reviews, growth forecasting, housing targets, and land needs assessments, and OPPI members were pleased to contribute.

- We support **minimum lot size** and encourage the Province to address technical considerations as policy is finalized (for example, irregular lot shapes).

- Finally**, we support creating consistency across Ontario on **Parkland Dedication**, with permissive wording that allows for some flexibility when required.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. We would be pleased to answer your questions.