

From: Lisa Johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 12, 2023 11:03 AM
To: Regional Clerk <ClerkGeneralLine@york.ca>
Subject: Bill 23

Dear York Region Council,

We're hoping that you can clarify York Region Council's official position on the Ford government's passing of Bill 23.

Our concerns are on numerous fronts. As we understand it, Bill 23 removes long-standing protected areas within Ontario's Greenbelt for development, leading to greater urban sprawl, destruction of critical wetlands and our watershed, not to mention threats to wildlife and locally grown food. The provincial government's position is that this sacrifice is necessary to build "affordable homes"; however, if the government was truly interested in creating affordable housing, they would build on existing available land closer to the areas accessible to existing employment and transit. Instead an already scarce labour force will be drawn from real affordable housing projects to the more lucrative suburban developments outside of the city.

According to the February 8, 2022 Report of the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force, "**a shortage of land isn't the cause of the problem. Land is available, both inside the existing built-up areas and on undeveloped land outside greenbelts**".

Secondly — and we would think of grave concern to York Region Council— this Bill removes development charges that municipalities depend upon when providing services to new residential areas. The Ford government argues that this reduction only applies to "affordable homes", but 80% of a \$1.2 million home is not what most would consider "affordable".

As the Mayor of Aurora, Tom Mrakas, said:

Bill 23 effectively guts many of the legislative mechanisms we rely upon as a municipality to fund our infrastructure needs, plan future parks and amenities, protect our natural and built heritage, and plan for growth and development. With the proposals in Bill 23, the Minister will have the power to amend municipal Official Plans, at any time, for any reason, and without public consultation (AMO).

We believe that many Vaughan residents, will be shocked and outraged, as we were, to learn from yesterday's **CBC news story that Vaughan estimates a property tax increase of 75 - 80%** to cover the shortfall.

In addition, the omnibus Bill 23 is "proposing **sweeping changes to the province's natural heritage and land use planning legislation** and policy." It erodes "environmental protections and excludes the public from meaningful involvement in land use planning and decisions affecting their communities" (Ontario Nature, November 7, 2022). This undemocratic bill removes the requirement for public meetings for draft plans of subdivision and limits third-party appeals at the Ontario Land Tribunal for official plan amendments, zoning bylaw amendments, and minor variances and consents. This destabilizes the current democratic process and essentially curtails community voice.

Additionally, Bill 23 undermines **cultural heritage protection** by "forcing communities to drop properties from their heritage registers if they are not designated in two years and requiring that

the standard for designation of properties be hiked from at least one of Ontario's heritage criteria to two" (Diane Chin, Architectural Conservancy Ontario's chair):

Most critically, Bill 23 will **undermine environmental protection and climate change** mitigation. It will limit the role of conservation authorities to solely flooding and erosion hazards. Currently, the role of conservation authorities is complex and varied (e.g., watershed planning/management, coordinated flood protection, conservation of green lands and biodiversity). Removing 7400 acres of protected, precious green space and farmland in the Greenbelt will not solve the housing crisis; especially for those who most need affordable housing. It will, however, destabilize the intricate ecosystems of farmlands, woodlands, rivers, streams and wetlands. Of particular concern is the drastic amendments to the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System, ensuring that very few wetlands in Ontario will be deemed provincially significant and protected from development.

Last but not least, the Chiefs of Ontario are opposed to Bill 23 because they were **not consulted with the removal of sections of the Greenbelt within their traditional territories**: The Chiefs of Ontario express their full support for First Nations Leadership in their opposition to Bill 23: More Homes Built Faster Act due to its clear violation of First Nations constitutionally protected, inherent and Treaty rights and its inevitable adverse environmental impacts on First Nations ancestral and traditional territories. The Government of Ontario's tabling of Bill 23 is a blatant violation of First Nations' inherent, domestic, and international rights over their ancestral and traditional territories, according to Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare.

These are just a few of the reasons why Council may have noticed a rapidly growing number of its usually quiet citizens, like us, speaking out, signing petitions, protesting and putting up signs of opposition. We individual citizens are joined by a coalition of groups including environmentalists, labour unions, farmers, housing advocates, past mayors, municipalities, architects and many others in opposing both Bill 23 and the Premier's plan to open up sections of the long-protected Greenbelt for housing development.

As I trust you'll agree, the Greenbelt must be protected for current and future generations of all Ontarians, and I hope we can count on York Region Council to join the public's opposition to Bill 23.

Please let us know your views on this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa Johnson and Oliver Dawson
Vaughan, Ward 2 Residents

