

Bill 23

OUR READERS WRITE

Editor

As the public cannot help but notice, there has been a lot of news coverage around the introduction of Ontario's Bill 23 that proposes to dismantle parts of Ontario's Greenbelt in order to address the housing crisis. And the public should notice, as Bill 23 is a real cause for alarm. The Greenbelt is an 800,000-hectare swath of Ontario's prime farmland, forests, and wetlands essential in the protection of sensitive areas, in the reining in of sprawl in the GTA, and the preservation of Ontario's (and half of Canada's) prime farmland (which we are currently losing at a rate of 319 acres per day in Ontario ? at this rate a child born today who lives into their nineties will live to see the disappearance of all farmland in Ontario. Who needs to eat?).

Some of Bill 23's impacts are the following:

? According to Wellington Water Watchers, Bill 23 will repeal no fewer than 36 regulations under the Conservation Authorities Act, as well as the Planning Act, the Development Charges Act, the Ontario Heritage Act, and the Ontario Land Tribunal Act;

? The proposals in Bill 23 would remove your right as a resident to appeal any planning decisions such as Official Plans, zoning by-laws and minor variances while maintaining a corporation's right to appeal those same decisions. It will remove requirements for a municipality to provide notice or hold public meetings on draft plans of subdivisions. It will eliminate site plan control on residential properties with fewer than 10 homes ? shoreline residents beware;

? In neighbouring Simcoe County, their own Director of Planning, Nathan Westendorf, has stated that under Bill 23 the County would no longer be required to have an Official Plan and according to Trevor Wilcox, General Manager of Corporate Performance for Simcoe County, the reducing and/or eliminating some Development Charges will incur a loss of some \$175 million in County revenue during the next 10 to 15 years. They project that property taxes would have to rise by about 4% to replace the lost revenue. These impacts will not just be restricted to Simcoe but will have implications for all counties across Ontario.

Ontario does not need to sacrifice environmental protections to address the housing crisis. Ontario's own Housing Affordability Task Force stated in its 2022 report that land is available outside the Greenbelt and within existing built-up areas. The Task Force stated that the Greenbelt must be protected and farms provide food and food security. If any of this concerns you, please follow the reporting on Bill 23 in your local newspapers or go to websites such as environmentaldefence.ca, simcoecountygreenbelt.ca, or contact your local MPP and let them know you do not want the Greenbelt carved up and that Bill 23 needs to be revised so that it addresses the housing crisis properly without breaking up the Greenbelt.

Brian Bell

Chair, Food and Water First

Vice-Chair, NDACT