This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 4:37:35 2026 / +0000 GMT

Development

by BRIAN LOCKHART

In the quest to turn southern Ontario into one giant parking lot complete with paved urban sprawl over farm land, field, and wooded areas, the provincial government is taking a dangerous step when it comes to allowing developers the opportunity to sidestep current regulations.

There is a bill (229) that is going to be passed that will allow the Minister of Natural Resources to make decisions on new developments and override the recommendations of conservation authorities around the province.

The developers are certainly on board with this. They've started their own propaganda campaign.

There is a commercial running lately on Toronto radio by a developer's association telling us how they have to start building thousands and thousands, maybe more, of homes in municipalities everywhere.

One line in the commercial says, ?Having a safe and comfortable place to live is more important than ever before.?

More important that ever before? I'm pretty sure having a place to live 20 years ago was just as important as it is having a place to live today. Did people in the 1950's live with leaky roofs, crumbling walls, and broken plumbing because they hadn't yet figured out safe and comfortable building techniques?

People living a century or five centuries ago also thought having a home was rather important. In fact having a place to live has been one of the most important things of all time along with having water and a food supply.

This new bill will allow developers to appeal conservation authorities' decisions directly to the minister who could then wave his hand and allow a development to proceed despite objections by environmental scientists.

The provincial government says the changes are supposed to speed up the process for small environmentally insignificant projects.

The truth is, projects are only ?small and insignificant' when they aren't happening in your back yard.

That's a dangerous combination to have government officials working with a private business in that capacity. It not only undermines the expertise of environmental professionals, it opens the door for all sorts of underhanded business.

Conservation Authorities exist for a reason. They are local watershed management agencies that deliver services and programs to protect and mange the impact on water and other natural resources.

They develop and maintain programs that will protect life and property from natural hazards like flooding and erosion. They develop and maintain programs that will conserve natural resources.

An important part of the Conservation Authorities' work is controlling development near wetlands, floodplains, slopes, and the Great Lakes shorelines. They advise municipalities to ensure developments are compatible with a healthy and sustainable environment and consistent with the Provincial Policy and plans.

If the government thinks we need more housing maybe the first step should be to take a look at why there aren't enough houses.

Demand at the current time is outweighing supply, and by a large margin.

I had a conversation with a real estate agent the other day who told me the prices for a small townhouse in his small town will be moving towards the $900,000 mark. That's a ridiculous price and no one should be forced to pay that for a roof over their head.

Speaking to another real estate agent in York Region, she lamented the fact that her own children and those of her friends, can't afford to buy a home in their own home town because they've been priced out of the market.

Creating all sorts of housing developments on prime farm land won't solve the housing shortage. It might make us all hungry in a few years though.

Building new developments in environmentally fragile areas or areas that should be protected, like the Niagara Escarpment just destroys nature, plain and simple.

Developers aren't in the business as a public service. They are there to make money.

They sell those new houses for what ever they can get for them.

People do have to have a place to live, but what good is buying a home if you become so in debt to get a roof over your house you will have no money left to enjoy life?

With an apparent incoming 400,000 per year to the country, most to southern Ontario, this crisis isn't going to end.

Allowing developers to build in places that should be protected will just add to another crises down the road.