

November 17, 2022

Toronto & York Region Labour Council
15 Gervais Drive, Suite #407
North York, Ontario
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Dear Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy,

We are writing to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the impact of Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*. We are deeply concerned about the proposed changes that would fundamentally change the province's natural heritage and how we design and build our neighbourhoods and communities. We believe that the proposal to remove 7,400 acres of precious farmland and natural areas from the protected Greenbelt is a short-sighted move as it would further expose Canadians to food insecurity and more climate change risks. In addition this Bill does not provide a meaningful solution to the lack of affordable housing for Ontarians.

With the last four early autumn seasons being among the warmest since records began, we can see that crop failures are already happening in regions like California, Florida, Spain, and Italy. Maintaining the province's wetlands, woodlands, rivers, streams, and diverse wildlife (including pollinator diversity) is critical to ensuring Ontario's food security and future protection from floods and climate change. As the 2013 flood in Toronto demonstrated, the people in this province are still vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Building on the protected Greenbelt would do little to address the shortage of affordable housing since the housing supply is only part of the problem. Still, the affordability of current units is a significant problem. Sprawl development also has a compounding effect on energy use since the transportation needs of these future residents will require exceptional amounts of energy. Low density housing also begets inefficient heating and cooling solutions - not to mention that the large homes built there will be prone to flooding. Affordable housing that is energy efficient and climate change resilient must be developed within existing communities.

Bill 23 also cannot override democratic processes and local representation. We need to increase densification in urban areas. At the same time, local communities, residents, and their municipally elected representatives must have a say on what, how, and where new developments are going.

What is alarming about Bill 23 is that it is being proposed, reviewed, and passed before any municipal government has formally sat since the recent municipal elections on October 24, 2022. The first City Council of Toronto is meeting on November 23 and will need more time to discuss Bill 23 and its impact on municipal planning and development.

The Toronto & York Region Labour Council, representing 220,000 workers in York Region, ask that you pause on Bill 23 until all municipal governments have had an opportunity to meet, review the impacts of Bill 23 and speak to the constituents they were elected to represent. We also ask that the government hold meaningful consultations with the broader community and other stakeholders to discuss the contents of the Bill.

Andria Babbington

President
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