Michael Helfinger

Senior Policy Advisor

Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

Business Climate and Funding Administration Division

Policy Coordination and Business Climate Branch

900 Bay Street, Hearst Block 7th Floor

Toronto, Ontario

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Dear Mr. Helfinger,

**RE: 013-4293 Bill 66:** **Restoring Ontario’s Competitiveness Act, 2018; 013-4125 Proposed open-for-business planning tool; 013-4239 New Regulation under the Planning Act for open-for-business planning tool**

Our organization, the Midland/Penetanguishene Field Naturalists Club, has grave concerns about the proposed Bill 66, and specifically Schedule 10. Yes, we need more employment in Midland and Penetanguishene, and we support the government’s desire to create more jobs, but we don’t believe that encroaching on farmland and natural heritage is the way to go. Simcoe County has a surplus of appropriately designated employment land. This would be devalued if landowners have the option of converting previously protected land.

 We share the same misgivings as numerous other environmental, conservation and grassroots community groups who have outlined the harm that could be done by this bill. The Acts it will override namely Greenbelt Act, Lake Simcoe Protection Act, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, Clean Water Act and Planning Act, have been implemented in the past years to protect valuable green spaces and farmland from development, and are not “red tape” to be brushed aside when certain interests see fit.

In our area of north Simcoe County we have seen a large increase in new residents from the GTA. Our club is concerned that the Open For Business bylaws, while focused on employment, also offer an opportunity for more housing to be added. When it comes to residential development, existing residents pay the cost through increased taxes, with the need for more infrastructure and demand for improved services.

We also question giving municipalities the power to approve new developments, with no public input or recourse. This is totally unfair and will result in acrimony amongst community members.

Another issue of concern for our club is the health and stability of our water and the pure aquifers that provide much of our area with clean drinking water. One such aquifer has its recharge area in the Waverley Highlands and supplies wells in the south of Tiny Township with some of the purest water in the world. This aquifer and others like it would be threatened by developments built over them and concerned citizens would not have to be notified of such plans.

Our club asks that you remove Schedule 10 from Bill 66 as it will prove detrimental to all the protections Ontario currently has in place.

Sincerely,

Midland/Penetanguishene Field Naturalists Club