Dear Mr. Ford and Ministers Jones, Clark, Fedeli, Gill, Lumsden, Piccini, Parsa, Smith, Surma, Thompson, and Ms. Fife,

I’m writing to you today with deep concern for the ramifications of the proposed Bill 23 and insist you not pave its way into law and over important farmlands and critical habitats. The housing crisis in Ontario demands a swift and effective response, but Bill 23 is *not* the solution for this problem.

Wetlands and Bogs:

Environmentally, wetlands and bogs are carbon sinks and house valuable wildlife - to destroy fragile environments that are crucial to our survival during a climate crisis is beyond foolishness. However, the critical nature of the wetlands and bogs you propose to pave over is not the only reason destroying these spaces is unwise.

As you undoubtedly know, housing and infrastructure built upon former wetlands is prone to flooding and leakage. It is cruel to allow new suburban housing construction in these risky areas while punting the substantial financial upkeep of these properties and infrastructure to homeowners and municipalities. As far as I can tell, the only groups who stand to benefit from this plan are developers and the current government. Building over wetlands and bogs is an irresponsible “quick fix” with disastrous long-term consequences.

Farmland:

The Niagara Region and the Holland Marsh are economic strength through farming and tourism. It’s unacceptable to develop them into housing- there’s no way to restore these areas once their rich soil is depleted and their charm tarnished. It’s irrational to trade the consistent economic bounty of these regions for the one time economic gain of suburban development when there are better solutions available.

Regional Planning:

Overriding the planning of regions such as Hamilton and my own, Waterloo, for the gains of development is undemocratic and ineffective. Waterloo Region has constructed its own thoughtful and well researched plan to address the housing crisis in ways that support the robust agricultural economy for which our region is well known, that increase density and not municipal infrastructure taxes, and that provide accommodation for Ontarians in every tax bracket through gentle densification. Our Countryside Line, the strict boundary between Waterloo and its surrounding countryside, needs to remain firm, and I do not support any bill that threatens its stability.

I urge the government to:

* Withdraw Bill 23 and replace it with a plan that respects the environment, homeowners, and renters alike through and requiring densification not suburbanization
* Reinstate the Regional Municipality of Waterloo’s planning authority
* Approve the Waterloo Regional Council’s Regional Office Plan Amendment (ROPA 6), as it’s a plan that actually allows for 118 000 more homes than your government’s current plan

I fully support my MPP, Catherine Fife, in her vote against Bill 23. We need a better plan.

Larissa Parsons Vafiades

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