

June 4, 2025

To: MPP Rob Flack  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

**RE: Urgent Concerns Regarding Bill 17 and the Future of Ontario's Urban Forests**

The Ontario Urban Forest Council urges the Province to revise Bill 17 before it proceeds further. While we support the goal of increasing affordable housing, this legislation, as drafted, will severely weaken the tools municipalities use to protect and expand urban forests. This will result in long term costs to public health, climate resilience, and taxpayers.

Bill 17 directly threatens the future of urban trees and green spaces by:

- Removing green development standards, including tree protection and planting requirements that cities rely on to maintain and grow their tree canopy
- Allowing the Province to override municipal zoning, opening parklands, ravines, and woodlots to development
- Centralizing environmental assessment authority, potentially excluding qualified local experts such as arborists, ecologists, and landscape architects
- Reducing development charges, which fund municipal tree planting, maintenance, and stormwater infrastructure
- Limiting public consultation on planning decisions, reducing community input on the protection of green spaces

Urban trees are critical infrastructure. They reduce extreme heat, absorb stormwater, improve air quality, and support public health. They also provide significant financial value. Every dollar invested in urban forests can return multiple dollars in avoided infrastructure, health care, and energy costs.

If passed as written, Bill 17 will lead to increased municipal spending to deal with heat waves, flooding, and infrastructure strain, costs that green infrastructure currently helps reduce.

We ask the Province to amend Bill 17 to:

- Maintain municipal authority to set and enforce green standards
- Ensure qualified local experts can continue conducting environmental reviews
- Protect designated green spaces and mature canopy from development
- Preserve funding tools that support tree planting and care
- Safeguard meaningful public input in land use decisions

We encourage the Province to recognize that healthy, resilient communities require both housing and urban nature. Trees are not in the way of development—they are part of the solution.

Sincerely,



Jade Schofield

President,  
Ontario Urban Forest Council

