

Mayor John Taylor and Councillors of The Town of Newmarket

Re: BILL 66

On December 6, 2018, the Ontario government introduced Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. It would allow municipalities to exempt commercial development from environmental laws included in the Provincial Clean Water Act, the Great Lakes Protection Act, the Places to Grow Act and the Greenbelt Act. The Bill also repeals the Toxic Reduction Act meant to reduce pollution by preventing industrial uses of certain toxic chemicals. And it allows municipalities to skip the normal process of providing public notice and holding hearings before exempting developers from all these laws.

We already have it on record, candidate Ford telling a group of builders that he would open up the Greenbelt for development. Suburban sprawl developer Mattamy Homes donated \$100,000 to Ontario Proud, a third party political advocacy group which ran lots of pro Ford ads prior to the election. Now elected, Premier Ford prepares to remove environmental standards, euphemistically referred to as red tape, that protect us all.

A few weeks ago the Toronto Star queried GTA mayors on their thoughts about Bill 66

Oakville Mayor Bob Burton– Bill 66 removes the ability for local residents or councillors to influence planning decisions. Specifically, if adopted, the bylaw would allow development to go forward with no public notice, no consultation and no appeal. Additionally the bylaw would override a “hold” placed on land by the local council and would exempt developers from their obligations under section 37 of the Planning Act. This bill is bad for municipalities and bad for constituents.

Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas – I personally would not be in favour of entering discussions with the province regarding the potential removal of any town lands that are currently protected areas and would oppose any such move. Our official Plan reflects our community’s collective vision for current and future planning.

I like to think that our council would echo the comments of these mayors. What concerns me and brings me here today is that we don't live in a vacuum. The Ford Government has designed Bill 66 to pit one community against another, in as Barrie Mayor Jeff Lehman fears, "a race to the bottom". Every town wants to see more growth and employment opportunities for their residents. Ford is now challenging you to see who can lower their environmental "red tape", the furthest to win the hearts of the developer. To the victor goes the spoils. Spoiled water, spoiled air, spoiled environment.

I read recently where mayor Ian Lovett of Whitchurch-Stouffville, said his council wants to develop on environmentally sensitive Greenbelt lands along Hwy 404 corridor. I wonder if this would be an acceptable comment from the mayor of Bradford -West Gwillimbury, where Hwy 400 runs through the Holland Marsh?

To quote Jennifer Keesmatt, Our Greater Toronto Area - which makes up the most densely populated area in Canada - requires our greenbelt. The two go hand-in-hand. Cities need fresh water and local food, farmland and wetlands. This isn't something that's just nice-to have. It's a necessity.

As you know our MPP Christine Elliott was airlifted into our community from Durham Region at the request of Doug Ford. It is unfortunate that the local conservative party was unable to put forth a candidate that lives in and understands the needs and aspirations of the residents of Newmarket. While I have no reason to suspect that she doesn't have our best interest at heart, I have also not heard her speak on behalf of her constituents against this monstrous Bill 66.

I am here today asking that the Mayor and council draw up a letter from the Town of Newmarket addressed to MPP Christine Elliott, Economic Development Minister Todd Smith, and Premier Doug Ford expressing our strong objections to Bill 66 and the removal of environmental protections enjoyed by all Ontarians.

Paul Jolie

Newmarket