

As a resident of Ontario, I am sure you are aware that the Provincial government is systematically weakening our natural environment. From changes in protections for endangered species in our Environmental Protection Act, to abuse of Minister's Zoning Orders which issue permits to build on environmentally sensitive lands with no possibility of appeal or public input, to dismantling the powers of our conservation authorities the list is far too long for this email.

Now there is a new development. The Province has meddled in municipal land use planning and has reduced density targets from 80% set by the former Provincial government down to only 50% density. This will result in tens of thousands of acres of prime agricultural rural land within the Greater Golden Horseshoe being lost to urban sprawl as single-family homes rather than middle density housing are being prioritized. Sprawl is associated with huge increases of GHG emissions, loss of precious rural land and loss of food production. A better goal is for a compact, livable city, which is walkable, has higher order transit, affordable infill housing, clean air and water. The suburban sprawl land-grab means select landowners will become billionaires overnight if the urban boundary moves an inch to include their land, and increased GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions will be locked in for centuries. Very little affordable housing, decaying inner cities and a massive loss of prime agricultural land are just some of the grave concerns of unchecked urban sprawl.

All of this is being done under the shroud of COVID-19 when people are distracted, losing jobs and homes, and forbidden from attending town halls, workshops, or public meetings. The Province and Municipalities are relying on zoom meetings and online questionnaires but people in rural areas as well as some urban areas have little to no internet connection and are being excluded from having a say in the growth of their city. Some students from rural areas are forced to sit in their cars in Tim Horton's parking lots for several hours per day just to connect to Wi-Fi and finish high school. This is not what public engagement looks like.

This campaign already had a huge win in Halton (Burlington, Oakville, Milton, and Halton Hills) where a motion was **unanimously** passed on Feb. 17 to delay their Land Needs Assessment Plan until after Covid-19 restrictions are lifted and people can be better informed. This issue is simply too complex to be considered by the public at this juncture amid a world-wide pandemic.

Please ensure an environmental impact study will be completed and those details are shared with the community.

Kind Regards,

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