

Mayor renews calls for land planning changes

Mayor Tom Mrakas has renewed his calls for changes to the land planning process at the Provincial level.

He will bring forward a motion to Aurora Council on February 22 calling not just for his fellow Council members to support the dissolution of the Ontario Land Tribunal, but for the Province's 443 other municipalities to follow suit as well.

The Tribunal (OLT) 'has the authority to make a final decision on planning matters based on a 'best planning outcome' and not whether the proposed development is in compliance with municipal and provincially approved official plans or consistent with provincial plans and policy,' says Mayor Mrakas in his motion, which was released January 20. 'Ontario is the only province in Canada that empowers a separate adjudicative tribunal to review and overrule local decisions applying provincially approved plans.'

The motion calls on the Government of Ontario to immediately dissolve the OLT 'thereby eliminating one of the most significant sources of red tape delaying the development of more attainable housing in Ontario.'

'Far too often we hear governments talk about 'cutting red tape', 'streaming the approval process' for new housing,' said the Mayor in a statement. 'I agree. But the way to achieve that is to, finally, recognize the authority of municipalities to uphold their Provincially approved Official Plans. If we had a process that recognized the authority of municipalities in land use planning decisions, then thousands of housing units could be built immediately. Permits could be issued tomorrow! Much needed supply could be increased by simply building what is allowed. No more endless battles, pitting developers against communities, over and over again at a cost of millions of dollars and untold wasted time.'

'If a provincial government is serious about cutting red tape, streamlining the planning process and increasing housing supply, the simple solution is to limit the scope of powers of the Ontario Land Tribunal and recognize the authority of municipalities to uphold their Official Plans.'

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter