

Province's housing measures continue to raise municipal concerns

The Ontario Government's plan to create more housing across the Province continues to draw concerns from municipal leaders at both the Town and Regional level.

Following the inauguration of Aurora's 2022-2026 Council on Tuesday evening, one of the first orders of business lawmakers will be set to tackle will be to formally oppose Bill 23.

In a motion that will come before Council in the coming weeks from Mayor Tom Mrakas, Council will be asked vote for calling upon the Province to "halt" the Bill's advancement through the Legislature to allow for further consultation with municipalities.

The goal, says Mrakas in his motion, is to "ensure that its objectives for sound decision-making for housing growth that meets local needs will be reasonably achieved."

"Many of the proposed changes (within the Bill) are significant and will restrict how municipalities manage growth through implementation of the Official Plan and the ability to provide essential infrastructure and community services," reads the motion. "The effect of Bill 23 is that the Conservation Authority will no longer be able to review and comment on development applications and supporting environmental studies on behalf of a municipality."

The Bill, he adds, proposes to freeze, reduce and remove development charges "money paid to communities by developers for infrastructure improvements to account for growth" and parkland dedication requirements.

"Bill 23 will remove all aspects of Site Plan Control of some residential development proposals up to 10 units," the Mayor continues. "Changes would also remove the ability to regulate architectural details and aspects of landscape designs."

Backlash against Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, continued at the Regional table last week with Regional Council passing a motion from Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti requesting that Queen's Park "halt" the Bill and consult the Housing Supply Action Plan Implementation Team to "ensure municipalities can work in partnership with the Province to address the housing affordability crisis in our communities."

"Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York remain aligned with the provincial goal of building more homes and increasing the speed of approvals, but we do have concerns with the proposed legislation," said York Region Chairman and CEO Wayne Emmerson. "As proposed, Bill 23 will have considerable and complex economic, social and environmental impacts and will significantly impact how municipal governments recover the costs associated with growth."

The Bill puts forward many changes, including modifications to the Development Charges Act and Planning Act which would put limits on how municipalities can finance infrastructure needed due to growth from new developments.

That, says the Region, contradicts "the goal of building more affordable housing."

"The concept that growth should pay for growth is a long-held practice of governments around the world," said Mayor Scarpitti in a statement. "In bringing forward this motion and asking the province to take a pause on Bill 23, Regional Council is asking the province to collaborate and work with its municipal partners to address the affordable housing crisis while ensuring the financial burden of growth-related infrastructure does not sit with our existing property taxpayers."

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