

Reader urges voices to be heard at Council on January 26

On January 26, Council will discuss a Notice of Motion tabled by Councillor Tom Mrakas, requesting the Province of Ontario for much needed change to limit the jurisdiction of the Ontario Municipal Board. (OMB). If you care about how your Town is developed going forward, please try and attend this meeting in support of this motion.

I am elated to see this motion address the most important concern facing every Ontario municipality confronted with the threat of unwanted development. So frequently this development is in opposition to the Official Town Plan that has been paid for by tax payers, adopted by Council, and already approved by the province!

Most people are unaware of the shocking reality that the OMB, composed of appointed officials, has the power to overturn a decision made by our elected representatives.

We live in the most wonderful, free, democratic country in the world but here in Ontario - our precious democratic freedom stops dead at the door of the OMB. At that point, a kind of tyranny takes over in the form of this quasi-judicial body that is basically feudal in nature, disguised as a legitimate government board.

We are allowed no participation in decisions made by the OMB that restrict our freedom to build our communities the way we want. Although the OMB appears to provide a forum for private citizens to speak at hearings, hard experience has taught many of us that this is only window dressing. Citizen presentations are always ignored.

In 2011 ? right here in Aurora - the OMB thumbed its nose at Aurora's Official Town Plan, along with the wishes of large groups of citizens, regarding the Lebovic Golf Course development. The OMB used its unilateral power to overturn a decision made by Council.

Our talented town planners, paid with our tax dollars, created a solid Official Town Plan approved by our Mayor and Town Council that did not include development in this location. Accordingly, Council voted no to this development but, stunningly, the OMB has the power to overturn any such decision - and they did ? and continue to do so with impunity. It is just so wrong.

Reform of this archaic, outdated institution is long overdue ? yet despite previous attempts, somehow Ontarians have lacked the political resolve to take the necessary steps to limit its jurisdiction and power. At the end of the day, the OMB is paid for with our tax dollars. Our own tax dollars are used to overturn decisions made by our duly elected representatives ? which are also paid for by our tax dollars. Apparently accountable to no one, the sweeping power of the OMB has no place in our modern democratic society. In Ontario today, it is important to fully recognize that our freedom and democratic rights have been hijacked by OMB, and the very fact that this is even possible puts our entire system at risk.

It would be so great if you could write to allcouncillors@aurora.com and ask them to support this motion. Hopefully other municipalities will follow suit and get this ball rolling. It has to start somewhere. How wonderful to think we may be able to start it right here in Aurora!

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