



### **Recap of Fall 2022**

As most are aware, this Fall saw the Ford Government unleash a barrage of highly regressive legislative, regulatory and policy initiatives aimed at building on its sprawl agenda. This takeover of municipal planning has been universally condemned except by the development industry. Virtually none of these proposed changes had ever been previously mentioned – including during the provincial election. They were announced the day after the municipal elections when the new municipal councils had yet to be constituted, nor would they be in time to meet the Government's extremely short commenting periods.

All these changes are being rationalized on the basis of the Government's pledge to facilitate the building of more housing despite there already being over 200,000 acres of unbuilt land approved for urbanization, including much of it for housing, along with the planning to accommodate over 2.5 million more people through new housing in our existing communities.

The sheer mass and timing of these changes is unprecedented with the vast majority being widely panned as having nothing to do with providing more housing. They essentially dismantle the progress of two generations by systematically weakening laws and policies and the democratic rights and abilities of citizens, municipalities and conservation authorities to protect, manage and plan our environment and communities – while turning Ontario's previously globally recognized planning system over to the development sector.

The Friends (along with numerous other groups) have made written submissions in opposition to many of these changes – including the most egregious as summarized below - see our submissions under Resources at <https://friendsofgh.ca>

### **Bill 23:**

- Abolishes 50 years of upper tier (regional) planning in most of the Golden Horseshoe
- Restricts 75 years of progressive environmental management and stewardship of Conservation Authorities by removing their mandate for watershed planning
- Reduces developer parkland requirements by 50%
- Limits municipal authorities related to architectural and landscape design

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- Limits municipal rental housing protection powers and caps inclusionary zoning requirements for affordable housing units to 5% and 25 years
- Severely weakens municipal heritage protection powers

**Bill 39:**

- Allows the Mayor of Toronto and other Heads of Council to pass by-laws with only 1/3 or more council votes
- Repeals the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act which permanently protected about 5,000 acres of land sold at agricultural rather than development land prices by the Harris Government on the promise it would be protected in perpetuity as agricultural and natural land – thus selling out Ontarians investment in the protection of these lands

**Greenbelt and Farmland Land Grab:**

- Removes 7400 acres of land from the Greenbelt Plan – including the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve
- Overrides new official plans adopted by duly elected municipal councils to convert tens of thousands more acres of farmland to urban use – including 5,435 acres and 8150 acres in Hamilton and Halton respectively
- Abolishes the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

**Conservation Authorities (CAs)**

- Removes “conservation of land” and “pollution” as purposes of the CA Act
- Orders CAs to inventory their landholdings with a view to selling land for housing
- Permits the Minister to require CAs to freeze fees and impose severe restrictions on commenting (under 10 different acts), appeals and permitting

**Ontario Place**

- The Government is privatizing a large piece of Ontario Place having entered into a deal with a private company to allow a 10 acre spa under glass while providing \$200 million in servicing and site preparation – with recent revelations that it would also contribute \$300 million for a 2000 car, 5 storey underground garage – all of which requires the removal of 850 trees and is dependent on high admission fees

In response to the deafening silence of the Government in response to widespread criticism of its actions the NDP has called for the Auditor General (AG) and the Green Party has called for the Integrity Commissioner to investigate the efficacy of the Greenbelt removals.

Most recently, Environmental Defence and Democracy Watch have called for an OPP investigation into the Greenbelt removals - see media release [here](#).

As well, Ontario Place for All, Waterfront for All and Architectural Conservancy Ontario have called for the AG to audit and investigate the Government's Ontario Place scheme – see media release [here](#).

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## Going Forward

### Building a new “Big Tent”: the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario (ALO)

In September the Friends participated in a ground-breaking meeting of groups and people who want to stop the Government’s sprawl agenda and return the focus on building an Ontario with affordable, mixed housing, situated within communities that offer many transportation options and are vibrant, healthy, affordable, climate resilient and surrounded by permanently protected farmland and natural areas. We also want a return to transparent, consultative governance that respects citizens and municipalities democratic rights together with legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks that enable the protection, management and planning of our farmland, natural areas and communities.

It was agreed that a “space” was needed to talk about multi-year plans and actions along with a vehicle to join diverse groups which share many common aims as a means of better powering the growing disillusionment with the Government’s agenda. Four weeks later, the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario (ALO) was created to do just that – which proved timely as shortly thereafter the Government doubled down on its regressive agenda by introducing Bill 23, Bill 39, the Greenbelt and Farmland Grab and their continued evisceration of Conservation Authorities.

The Alliance took this as an opportunity to create a Media Release and Mission Statement [Media Release](#) [7-page Joint Statement](#) which was signed by over 125 groups representing hundreds of thousands of Ontarians from the agricultural, housing, planning, environment, health, and democracy sectors together with community associations and 100+ individuals. Friends Chair David Crombie was featured on CBC TV’s The National talking about our efforts.

The Alliance provides an important opportunity to coalesce the complementary interests of these diverse sectors and create a stronger, louder voice to build support for our vision of the Golden Horseshoe and better governance. That’s why the Friends of the Golden Horseshoe will continue playing a key role in building and supporting the Alliance.

The Friends encourage you to follow and support the Alliance (click [here to join](#)) and to share information about it as broadly as possible. Stay tuned for more information on the official launch of the Alliance early in the new years along with ways to help – including financial support.

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