

September 26th, 2023

To: Nick Stavropoulos
Office of the Auditor General of Ontario
20 Dundas Street West, Suite 1530
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2C2

David Wake
Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario
2 Bloor Street West, Suite 2100
Toronto, ON
M4W 3E2

CC: The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay St, 17th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 2J3

Dear Auditor General Stavropoulos and Integrity Commissioner Wake,

Ottawans watched with interest as your offices concluded their recent respective investigations related to the provincially directed removal of lands from the Greenbelt in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). The resultant findings have led us to question whether similar dynamics were at play in the provincially directed urban boundary expansion in Ottawa in November of 2022.

The 654-hectare urban expansion lands added to Ottawa's urban boundary by the province had been previously reviewed and evaluated by Ottawa city staff. Most of these lands scored poorly in respect to the criteria that included proximity to transit, sewage and water infrastructure, and the protection of farmland. While increasing housing supply was the primary objective of the city-led urban boundary expansion in 2020, Ottawa planners demonstrated through their analysis that the 654 hectares added by the province to Ottawa's urban boundary were not needed to meet the target of homes to be built in Ottawa. They would also be extraordinarily costly to residents of Ottawa. This is mirrored in the Special Report on Changes to the Greenbelt in the GTHA which also concluded that "that there was sufficient land for the target of ... homes to be built without [the provincial removal of Greenbelt lands].

Generally, there has been a lack of transparency and accountability for the rationale behind the provincially led expansion in Ottawa. Auditor General Stravropoulos, your predecessor found the process in the GTHA to be similarly wanting. She "found that how the land sites were selected [by the province] was not transparent, fair, objective, or fully informed." The Special Report on Changes to the Greenbelt also concluded that "fair, transparent and respectful consultation with the people of Ontario did not take place." This contrasts with a municipal process that presented three options for consultation in advance of the expansion in 2020 with opportunities for public input. Residents of Ottawa deserve a say on a decision that will cost them billions of dollars in taxes to support dispersed infrastructure in the years to come.

Ottawans have yet to see an adequate explanation from the province as to why the work of local land-use planning officials was dismissed by this provincial decision. Integrity Commissioner Wake, your investigation into the conduct of the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs concluded that the Ministry, under the Minister's watch, alerted some developers "to a potential change in the government's position on the Greenbelt with the result that their private interests were furthered improperly." This investigation was pursued after complaints were filed by opposition members at Queen's Park following media reports suggesting that some prominent developers who are Progressive Conservative donors were benefiting from the province's land site selections.



Here in Ottawa, there has been similar reporting on a particular lot in the expansion lands added by the province: a farm on Watters Road that was not even contemplated for development by the city due to the province's own policies on protecting farmland. This reporting revealed that this farm had been purchased by a newly incorporated limited liability company (1177 Watters Developments Ltd) after the municipality had approved a new urban boundary that did not include it, but before the province reversed that decision. All five directors of 1177 Watters Developments Ltd are donors to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

We are requesting that your respective offices also investigate the decision-making that led to the provincial decision to unilaterally add land sites to Ottawa's urban boundary. This decision was made without consultation or explanation and was at odds with the recommendations of local land-use planning officials. The people of Ottawa deserve transparency and accountability.

Sincerely,

Shawn Menard, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 17
Glen Gower, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 6
Ariel Troster, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 14
Sean Devine, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 9
Jessica Bradley, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 10
Theresa Kavanagh, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 7
Marty Carr, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 18
Rawlson King, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 13
Clarke Kelly, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 5
Laine Johnson, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 8
Riley Brockington, Ottawa City Councillor for Ward 16

