

Massive Coalition of Groups Unite to Condemn Ford Government's Secret Sprawl Plans

Toronto: Today a rare coalition of farmers, housing advocates, urban planners, environmentalists, labour unions, healthcare workers and community groups from across Ontario united and released a damning Statement of the Province's recently proposed recipe for sprawl: Bill 23 and the proposal to remove precious farmland and natural areas from the protected Greenbelt. The 7-page document is signed by more than 125 organizations and almost 100 individuals.

The 7-page Statement shows how the government's scheme will not create more housing or improve affordability but will supercharge expensive and wasteful urban sprawl, undermine environmental protection, threaten farmers, prevent the transformation of existing sprawl communities into climate resilient communities and transfer money from taxpayers to land speculators and developers.

"These proposed actions by the Province will not solve the housing and affordability crisis," said Geordie Dent, Executive Director of the Federation of Metro Tenants' Association. "Renters will have fewer protections. And people who are looking for housing they can afford in neighbourhoods they want to live in won't be any better off because of these proposed actions."

"Bill 23 and the proposal to remove farmland from the Greenbelt would harm farmers and reduce their capacity to supply Ontarians with the food we all need," said Max Hansgen, President of the National Farmers Union - Ontario. "These proposed actions would also take away farmers' rights to appeal development decisions that could harm their land and farm businesses and would make it much easier for land speculators to turn irreplaceable farmland into unsustainable urban sprawl."

"I am profoundly disturbed by the government's proposed actions," said David Crombie, former Mayor of Toronto and former Chair of the Provincial Greenbelt Council. "They won't solve the housing crisis but they would make it harder to fix our existing neighbourhoods, towns and cities as well as protect the farmland and natural areas that sustain them. If the Premier doesn't put the brakes on these ill-considered plans, we'll have more sprawl and much less local food and protection against flooding and the climate crisis."

"Bill 23 undoes all we've learned about how best to manage urban growth. It will severely hurt municipalities, both their revenues and their ability to plan and design their communities properly," said Anne Golden, former Chair, Task Force on the Future of the GTA. "This bill would make it much harder for municipalities to build a healthy and affordable mix of new housing within existing urban areas. Instead, the Bill would pave the way for the construction of more damaging urban sprawl on the very farmland and natural areas we'll need to get through the climate crisis."

"I hope the Premier listens to the growing chorus of Ontarians and hits the pause button on these terrible proposals," said David Crombie. "The good news is there are solutions to the housing crisis that can be implemented quickly. These solutions don't harm Conservation Authorities, the Greenbelt, farmland and natural areas. And they build on good urban planning and public participation already being used in cities across Ontario."

The following individuals are available for comment:

- David Crombie, former Chair of the Greenbelt Council
- Geordie Dent, Executive Director, Federation of Metro Tenants' Association
- Max Hansgen, President of the National Farmers Union - Ontario
- Anne Golden, former Chair, Task Force on the Future of the GTA
- Kevin Eby, former Director of Community Planning at the Region of Waterloo
- Tim Gray, Executive Director, Environmental Defence

To arrange interviews, please contact: Franz Hartmann 416-606-8881.