



Old Ottawa East Community Association

Submission to the Ontario Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure, and Cultural Policy

Re: Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*

INTRODUCTION

The Old Ottawa East Community Association (OOECA) is an organisation of community-minded volunteers representing the residents and businesses of Ottawa's Old Ottawa East neighbourhoods. We are dedicated to supporting citizen engagement in issues that affect the livability of our community and our quality of life, including issues around land-use planning and responsible development. More information on our organisation can be found at the following link: [About OECA | Ottawa East Community Association](#).

OUR CONCERNS

Bill 23 is a critically important piece of legislation, with far-reaching and long-term impacts for communities and citizens across Ontario. We have reviewed the Bill's key provisions carefully and, while we support its intent to address the need for housing, we join other concerned groups in calling for major changes to the Bill before it is rushed into law. As a community association, we are concerned, first and foremost, with the Bill's assault on the right at the local level to shape the fabric of our neighbourhoods and communities. Like others, we are also alarmed by provisions in the Bill that neuter environmental and 'green' safeguards and download the financial burden of development to existing property taxpayers. We address each of these concerns in turn below.

Our right to shape the fabric of our communities

As a community association, we are dedicated to encouraging and facilitating citizens' engagement in local planning and development issues, and to giving them a voice in shaping the built and natural character of our neighbourhoods. We are particularly concerned about the provisions in the proposed Bill that constrain this engagement at the municipal level and stifle local voices, while giving undue influence and power to developers. Although provincial and federal governments can, and should, set broad parameters for land use, it is important that citizens have a voice in shaping developments in their own communities. As citizens, we have the right to expect that decisions around development respond

to our local needs and interests, respect the built heritage and character of our neighbourhoods, and enhance our quality of life.

Provisions in the proposed Bill constrain local engagement in two key ways:

- *Reducing municipal governments' authority over planning and development*: Provisions in the Bill limit a municipality's latitude to determine the specifics of its Official Plan, Secondary Plans, and Zoning By-laws, overriding planning and development decisions taken at the local level. These planning and development decisions are typically the product of complex consultations and collaboration among the municipal government, community associations such as ours, and other interested citizens and groups. They represent the 'fruits' of our democratic processes — processes that should be respected by the provincial government.
- *Denying the right of citizens to appeal planning/development decisions*: By denying the right of citizens to influence the decisions that affect them and their local communities, this Bill strikes at the heart of our democratic processes. While we 'think global', we *act* local because we *live* local. The way that new housing and developments relate to existing neighbourhoods and to the public realm is a subject of legitimate interest to all in the community, given their impact on livability and well-being. As local residents, we should not be denied the right to influence decisions around issues such as community design, site design, sustainable design, and landscapes, and to appeal decisions that do not meet our needs and interests.

Disregard for environmental and 'green' considerations

Like many other organisations, we are also deeply concerned about the Bill's reduced environmental oversight, which will lead to negative impacts on environmental well-being and access to green space in our communities. It is well-documented that greenspace enhances the livability of our communities and plays a significant role in our physical and mental well-being. Proposed measures — such as gutting the role of Ontario's 36 regional conservation authorities, restricting municipalities' ability to promote green building standards, and reducing parkland requirements for new developments — strike at the heart of responsible, sustainable development and increase risks of flooding, erosion, drought, and compromised water quality. We believe that Bill 23's attack on environmental standards is regressive and short-sighted, at a time when we need bold action to address the climate crisis, the increasing threats to natural habitats and biodiversity, and the environmental determinants of human health.

Downloading of the financial burden of development

Growth must pay for growth. Founded upon concepts of equity, this has long been the rationale for development charges. It is unfair and unreasonable to shift the financial burden of infrastructure and services for new developments to existing property taxpayers, or to jeopardize the quality and reliability of municipal amenities and benefits for new communities. Discounting some and outrightly eliminating other development charges will force one or both of these outcomes, while providing no guarantees that developers will pass their savings onto new home buyers and renters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We acknowledge the importance of getting more homes built to house Ontario's growing population and address the challenge of affordability. However, we believe that this can be achieved while still respecting both the legitimate right of local residents to shape their communities' future and the

sustainable practices required to safeguard our environment and green spaces. To this end, we recommend that key articles of Bill 23 be amended to:

- Restore the authority of municipalities to determine the specifics of their Official Plans, associated Secondary Plans, and zoning bylaws, to reflect the context of their communities and interests of their residents.
- Protect the right of local residents to shape the fabric of their communities and the built and natural character of their neighbourhoods, including through the right of appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal.
- Restore environmental oversight measures, including protecting the role of regional conservation authorities and municipalities' right to impose green building standards and parkland requirements on developers and builders.
- Restore the principle of 'growth pays for growth' by reinstating development charges and instead focusing on finding process efficiencies in the system.

Given the critical importance of Bill 23 and its far-reaching impacts, we further recommend that the progress of the Bill through the Ontario Legislature be slowed, to allow more time for substantive public consultation and collaboration to address issues of concern.

On behalf of the Old Ottawa East Community Association,



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John Dance
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c.c. Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
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