

Dear Premier Ford:

Feb. 8, 2023

The 2018 “**Made in Ontario Environment Plan**” told the people of Ontario that

- “...climate change poses a serious threat to Ontario’s natural areas and that conservation of these areas can play an important role in mitigating and adapting to climate change” (p 46).

You and your colleagues promised to:

- “...protect and enhance our natural areas, support conservation efforts, continue to conserve species at risk, develop adaptation strategies, and promote the importance of healthy natural spaces for future generations to use and enjoy.”
- “...improve the resilience of natural ecosystems by “collaborating with partners to conserve and restore natural ecosystems such as wetlands and ensure that climate change impacts are considered when developing plans for their protection.” (p47)

Instead, despite widespread opposition, we now have Bill 23.

Bill 23:

- places increased planning responsibilities on municipalities whose budgets are already stretched to the breaking point and whose staff are often not properly trained and supported in making such decisions
- strips municipalities of the ability to hold developers to energy efficient standards in new buildings, which are crucial to meeting our climate targets.
- burdens taxpayers with paying for essential services, such as sewers, roads, and other necessary infrastructure¹ (because of the freeze on municipal development charges)
- encourages urban sprawl making residents more dependent on private cars for transportation, which will, in turn, further increase our greenhouse gas emissions.
- will result in property damage from flooding² and will negatively impact both surface and ground water quality

These are only a few of the negative impacts of Bill 23 in this letter. We encourage you to review Ontario Nature’s recent [analysis of the ecological impact of Bill 23](#)

Your Party says it understands and agrees that our ability to adapt to extreme weather events is dependent on resilient ecosystems and watersheds.

- **BUT** the legislative action advanced in Bill 23 moves Ontario in the opposite direction.

¹ This will likely result in increased residential property taxes, especially in rural communities like Haliburton, with less commercial or industrial assessment.

² Ontario taxpayers will inevitably be on the hook for the cost of this damage which could be dramatically reduced with thoughtful advanced “climate-wise” land use and infrastructure planning.

EH! Environment Haliburton!

Your Party says it embraces local food resiliency as an essential climate adaptation strategy.

- **BUT** targets the very land that would make it possible to reduce dependency on vulnerable and carbon-intensive global food supply chains.

Remaining wetlands must not be developed.

- Ontario, including Haliburton County, has already lost too many
- Wetlands are essential to *both* adapting to the current climate and weather disruption as well as storing huge amounts of carbon that, if released, would make our future weather and climate much more dangerous.
- Wetlands are among the most productive and diverse ecosystems in the world, comparable to rain forests and coral reefs.
- Researchers, Tariq Aziz and Phillippe Van Cappellen at the University of Waterloo found in a recent study that wetlands provide an estimated \$4.2 billion worth of sediment and phosphorus filtration each year, helping to keep our drinking water, lakes and rivers clean. Aziz states: “Wetlands are earth’s most valuable ecosystems; these diverse and complex systems provide enormous benefits to humans and other forms of life but are often overlooked.”

Wildlife needs connectivity of habitat to survive and thrive.

- Bill 23 will fragment the Greenbelt.
- Ontario’s Greenbelt was created in 2005 to prevent further loss of farmland and natural heritage and to restrict urban sprawl. Premier Ford also promised not to “touch the Greenbelt”, when campaigning for election in 2018 and re-election in 2022.

Bill 23 will not effectively increase the supply of housing, let alone truly affordable housing.

- According to your government’s own analysis, the changes in this legislation will only create 50,000 of the 1.5 million homes needed and promised. The bill largely ignores the recommendations of the Province’s own *Housing Affordability Task Force*, which pushed for an end to exclusionary zoning inside cities to ensure more housing supply and greater affordability in a mix of housing types located close to public transit, existing sewer and water infrastructure, jobs and services.

Ms. Scott, on behalf of Environment Haliburton!, I urge you, as our MPP, to honour the promises and commitments made in *The Made in Ontario Environment Plan* and speak out against Bill 23.

Sincerely,

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EH! Environment Haliburton!

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