

Ontario groups jointly oppose Bill 23, call for Days of Action

More organizations join the chorus of voices opposing so-called “More Homes Built Faster” act.

Queen’s Park, Toronto 10 am – Voices representing First Nations, Housing, Healthcare, and Municipal interests joined dozens of others in calling on the provincial legislature to halt the passing of Bill 23, the so-called “More Homes Built Faster” Act and called for Days of Action on December 3 and 4.

At a press conference at Queen’s Park on Monday morning, **Chief Kelly LaRocca** of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, **Alejandra Ruiz Vargas** of ACORN-Canada, **Dr. Mili Roy** of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, and **Steve Parish**, former mayor of the Town of Ajax, urged the Ontario Legislature to stop the passage of the act, which was expected to be called for a vote on Monday.

Environmental Protections Lost

If passed in its current form, Bill 23 would be devastating for environmental protections in the province. It would also remove municipalities’ ability to set green standards for buildings, a critical tool for municipal climate plans across Ontario.

“Weakening wetland protections, reducing the power of Conservation Authorities, and meddling with longstanding processes are not needed to build housing – they simply undermine our democracy and place the environment at risk of permanent damage,” said Chief LaRocca in a statement read to the press.

The destruction of environmental protections would have a detrimental impact on the health of all Ontarians.

“The Bill will undermine housing and food security, both fundamental determinants of health. It will escalate deadly air pollution which already prematurely kills 6600 Ontarians every year, and fuel the climate crisis which represents the single greatest human health crisis today,” said Dr. Mili Roy of the Ontario Chapter of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

Harmful to renters and to the availability of affordable housing

Bill 23 would also be exceptionally harmful to renters, taking away municipal rules that require developers to replace current rental units with similarly-priced units for tenants displaced by development.

“Getting rid of the rental replacement bylaws in cities will mean more tenants will be displaced from their homes and we will lose the last remaining affordable housing stock we already have,” said Alejandra Ruiz Vargas of ACORN-Canada, a network of community organizations that support low- and medium-income citizens.

Massive cuts to municipal budgets

Another way that Bill 23 hurts housing affordability is through cutting municipal budgets by drastically reducing the development fees municipalities use to help pay for services and affordable housing construction. *“Reducing development charges in Bill 23 takes substantial revenues from municipalities and puts them in the pockets of developers,”* said Steve Parish, the former mayor of the Town of Ajax. *“There are only two possible ways municipalities can deal with this - don’t build the required infrastructure with the resulting decline in our living conditions; or place the burden of this shortfall on the backs of existing property taxpayers who are already struggling.”*

Calls to join Days of Action

The coalition is calling on all Ontarians to join the upcoming Days of Action on the weekend of December 3, and to call on their MPPs to halt MPPs halt the passage of the bill.

Altogether, dozens of organizations representing thousands of people who live and work in Ontario have called for the provincial legislature to halt the passing of Bill 23, the so-called “More Homes Built Faster” act. These include municipal councils, First Nations, environmental and conservation organizations, healthcare workers, housing advocates, and agricultural organizations.

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Full Quotes

“Our First Nation is calling on the province to reconsider many elements of its legislation and pursue a thoughtful approach to housing supply. Weakening wetland protections, reducing the power of Conservation Authorities, and meddling with longstanding processes are not needed to build housing – they simply undermine our democracy and place the environment at risk of permanent damage.”

Chief Kelly LaRocca, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation

“Bill 23 is not in the interest of Ontarians. It will unleash incalculable public health harms locked in for generations to come, while devastating the health of our environment, economy and democracy.. The Bill will undermine housing and food security, both fundamental determinants of health. It will escalate deadly air pollution which already prematurely kills 6600 Ontarians every year, and fuel the climate crisis which represents the single greatest human health crisis today. Ontarians call on the government to halt Bill 23 and implement the ready sustainable solutions already put forward by professional planners and municipalities. There has never been more at stake, as the ways in which we use our land, move, eat and live over just the next few years will determine our chances of a healthy livable future for all.”

Dr. Mili Roy, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), Ontario Chapter

“Bill 23 will be devastating for tenants in Ontario. Getting rid of the rental replacement bylaws in cities will mean more tenants will be displaced from their homes and we will lose the last remaining affordable housing stock we already have. Not to mention it will gut the Inclusionary Zoning policy ACORN and allies won last year. It's clear Ford does not care about the well being of low to moderate income people in Ontario.”

Alejandra Ruiz Vargas, ACORN-Canada (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now)

“Reducing development charges in Bill 23 takes substantial revenues from municipalities and puts them in the pockets of developers. There are only two possible ways municipalities can deal with this - don't build the required infrastructure with the resulting decline in our living conditions; or place the burden of this shortfall on the backs of existing property taxpayers who are already struggling.”

Steve Parish, Former Mayor, Town of Ajax

Addendum: List of organizations that have also called for either a pause or an end to Bill 23:

First Nations

Chiefs of Ontario

“The Government of Ontario’s tabling of Bill 23 is a blatant violation of First Nations’ inherent, domestic, and international rights over their ancestral and traditional territories,” said Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare. “Bill 23 will inevitably harm Ontario’s environmental heritage and weaken land and water environmental protection.”

(Source: <https://chiefs-of-ontario.org/chiefs-of-ontario-and-first-nations-oppose-bill-23-more-homes-built-faster-act/>)

Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation

“Our First Nation is calling on the province to reconsider many elements of its legislation and pursue a thoughtful approach to housing supply. Weakening wetland protections, reducing the power of Conservation Authorities, and meddling with longstanding processes are not needed to build housing – they simply undermine our democracy and place the environment at risk of permanent damage.”

- Chief Kelly LaRocca

(Source: Statement read to media, Nov 28, 2022)

Healthcare Workers

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

“The Bill will undermine housing and food security, both fundamental determinants of health. It will escalate deadly air pollution which already prematurely kills 6600 Ontarians every year, and fuel the climate crisis which represents the single greatest human health crisis today.”

(source: Nov 28 Press Conference)

Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario

“If passed into law, Bill 23 as written will likely worsen the circumstances of tenants and those who are precariously housed, and will negatively impact multiple social and ecological determinants of health.”

(source: <https://rnao.ca/sites/default/files/2022-11/RNAO%20Bill%2023%20Submission%20Nov%2017%202022.pdf>)

Housing Advocates

ACORN Canada

“Bill 23 will be devastating for tenants in Ontario. Getting rid of the rental replacement bylaws in cities will mean more tenants will be displaced from their homes and we will lose the last remaining affordable housing stock we already have.”

(source: November 28, 2022 press conference)

Municipalities

Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

“Preliminary analysis of the Bill indicates the transfer of up to \$1 billion a year in costs from private sector developers to property taxpayers without any likelihood of improved housing affordability. Similarly, the bill’s provisions designed to reduce environmental protection will benefit developers in the short term, with costs to the public and homeowners that cannot be calculated. Members of the Committee and all Members of the Provincial Parliament will need to consider in whose interest they govern. Bill 23, as drafted, benefits private interests at the expense of public interests – at the expense of property taxpayers and Ontario’s natural environment.”

(source: https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/Submissions/SC_HICP-LTR_AP_AMO_Submission_Bill%2023_More_Homes_Built_Faster_Act_20221116.pdf)

Incomplete List of Municipalities that have passed motions against Bill 23

Toronto	http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/decisionBodyProfile.do?function=doPrepare&meetingId=23057#Meeting-2023.CC1
York Region	https://www.york.ca/newsroom/york-regional-council-calls-provincial-government-halt-bill-23
Mississauga	https://www.mississauga.ca/city-of-mississauga-news/news/cities-must-be-made-whole-city-of-mississauga-responds-to-devastating-financial-impacts-of-bill-23/
Brampton	https://thepointer.com/article/2022-11-25/mississauga-brampton-councils-denounce-bill-23-dubbed-the-train-wreck-bill-for-its-dire-threat-to-city-hall-finances
Burlington	https://mariannemedward.ca/burlington-council-unanimously-passes-bill-23-resolution-asking-for-extended-commenting-periods-for-legislative-changes-more-fulsome-municipal-consultations/
Guelph	https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/city-council-united-in-its-opposition-to-bill-23-6133717
St. Catharines	https://www.stcatharines.ca/en/planning-and-development/bill-23.aspx#Response-and-Recommendation
Collingwood	https://www.simcoe.com/news-story/10759876—grossly-unfair-collingwood-council-speaks-out-against-transformative-bill-23-legislation/
Kawartha Lakes	https://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/local-kawartha-lakes/news/2022/11/25/bill-23-benefits-private-interests-at-the-expense-of-public-interests-amo.html
Elizabethton-Kitley	https://www.recorder.ca/news/elizabethtown-kitley-joins-bill-23-pushback
Caledon	https://www.caledonenterprise.com/news-story/10799995-caledon-town-council-passes-motion-requesting-ontario-government-to-halt-bill-23/
Waterloo	https://kitchener.citynews.ca/local-news/outgoing-waterloo-council-passes-motion-asking-province-to-hold-off-on-bill-23-6120474
Kincardine	https://www.bayshorebroadcasting.ca/2022/11/22/157911/

Building Construction and Architecture

Ontario Association of Architects

“The Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) reports that it has reviewed Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 ... it strongly urges the provincial government to closely examine the potential unintended consequences of such a sweeping bill.”

(source: <https://www.canadianarchitect.com/aaa-responds-to-provincial-government-re-more-homes-built-faster-act/>)

Agriculture

Ontario Federation of Agriculture

“The urban boundary expansion announced will use up more farmland. And once it turns into housing and development, it never goes back to farmland.”

(source: <https://ofa.on.ca/ofa-presents-to-ontario-standing-committee-on-bill-23/>)

Ontario Farmland Trust

“Ontario needs an increased housing supply, but this is not an effective solution. It is likely that these changes will result in mainly detached, single-family homes being built. These homes will still be unaffordable for potential new homebuyers, and will not solve the housing crisis. We need to focus on building high-density housing options in pre-developed areas that are affordable, walkable, and easily accessible via public transit.”

(source: <https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/2022/11/10/bill-23/>)

Environmentalists

Canadian Environmental Law Association

“The overwhelming advice to the Committee was that the Bill will not achieve its stated objectives, but is extremely likely to cause unintended adverse consequences, and to create new and difficult problems in Ontario communities. Therefore, we ask the Committee to pause its proceedings in order to assess all of the input, oral and written, before continuing any further consideration of this Bill.”

(source: <https://cela.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CELA-letter-to-Standing-Committee-re-Bill-23-15Nov2022.pdf>)

Toronto Environmental Alliance

“Toronto is facing a housing affordability crisis, a climate crisis, and now a city budget crisis. Bill 23 will make every single one of these crises worse while doing almost nothing to build more homes in Toronto.”

(source: https://www.torontoenvironment.org/there_s_something_bad_for_everyone_in_bill_23)

Environmental Defence

“The Ontario government’s Bill 23 “More Homes Built Faster Act” includes only tepid measures to enable more badly needed home construction in existing cities, while diving deep into dangerous attacks on wetland habitat, woodlands and other conservation lands and encouraging even more of the expensive rural sprawl that caused Ontario’s housing crisis.”

(source: <https://environmentaldefence.ca/2022/10/31/ontarios-housing-bill-is-actually-a-trojan-horse-for-environmentally-catastrophic-rural-sprawl/>)

Ontario Nature

“This omnibus bill proposes sweeping changes to the province’s natural heritage and land use planning legislation and policy. If accepted, it would amend many laws (e.g., the Planning Act, the Conservation Authorities Act), removing and weakening environmental protections and

excluding the public from meaningful involvement in land use planning and decisions affecting their communities.”

(source: <https://ontarionature.org/campaigns/bill-23/>)