



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Fort Erie Mayor weighs in on Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act

FORT ERIE (Dec 6, 2022) - **Statement from Mayor Wayne Redekop:**

There have been several statements made by the Premier and his Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing recently relative to Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, which was passed into law on November 28th, that insist on response.

1. The Premier and his minister have set a target of 1.5 million new housing units to be constructed over the next 10 years. The provisions of Bill 23 remove planning responsibilities from some Regions, including Niagara, and Conservation Authorities and reduce public consultation into a number of planning processes, while permitting some housing construction and development without the need for municipal review or approval. The premise is that these changes in planning processes are necessary in order for the government to meet its housing target in the face of current growth and the anticipated influx of millions of newcomers to Canada as a result of the federal government's stated intention to admit 500,000 immigrants per year into the country. The Premier and his minister have completely ignored the fact that there may already be as many as 500,000 already approved or draft approved housing units for construction across Ontario. In Fort Erie alone, about 2,800 housing units have been approved or draft approved. This represents the equivalent an over 8 year supply of housing at the current rate of issuance of building permits. At least two subdivisions in Fort Erie have been serviced (one in Crystal Beach between Schooley Road and Elmwood Avenue, south of Rebstock Road, and one in Crescent Park east of Pettit Road just north of Garrison Road) but remain dormant with no construction taking place. Are the Premier and Minister not aware that one-third of their housing target has already been met if the government simply required developers to build what has already been approved?
2. The Premier and his minister state that it is necessary to remove previously environmentally protected lands from the Greenbelt in order for the province to meet its housing target. Yet the Housing Affordability Task Force, hand-picked and appointed by the Premier, states at page 10 of its report issued in February 2022, that "a shortage of land isn't the cause of the problem. Land is available, both inside

the existing built-up areas and on undeveloped land outside greenbelts”. The Task Force goes on to state: “Greenbelts and other environmentally sensitive areas must be protected”. Have the Premier or Minister Clark read the report? It would be startling if they have not since it forms the basis of the significant policy changes in planning in Ontario implemented this year by the government, including Bill 23.

3. The Premier has stated that he does not believe that municipalities will be prejudiced by the loss of development charge revenues that are relied upon to construct infrastructure and amenities necessary to accommodate growth in our communities. He has stated that the lost revenues can be replaced by eliminating waste. The Premier should know that municipalities, which are creatures of the province and completely under the jurisdiction of the province, must balance their budgets each year and are not permitted to accumulate debt beyond provincially prescribed limits. He should also be aware that municipalities have been required by the province to establish asset management plans to identify existing infrastructure and the condition of that infrastructure, how that infrastructure will be maintained in the long run and how that maintenance will be financed. These costs total millions of dollars even for municipalities such as Fort Erie. Development charges are part of the funding required to meet those infrastructure needs as growth occurs. The Premier should be aware of the financial challenges faced by municipalities in Ontario and that his government maintains strict oversight of municipal expenditures. He should know that most municipalities in Ontario have not met their long-term infrastructure needs, although Fort Erie has managed to do so. The elimination or reduction of development charges will significantly benefit developers with no guarantee that it will result in reduced housing prices. It will also shift the financial burden of growth from new development to existing residents/taxpayers.

I have recently commented on the concerns that the Town of Fort Erie has with respect to the provisions of Bill 23 and we have forwarded to the government the report prepared by staff in that regard. I have personally corresponded with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about our concerns and what we perceive to be unintended consequences of Bill 23.

The question: Why Bill 23?

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