



29 November 2022

Open letter to The Chiefs of Ontario

Bill 23: More Homes Built Faster Act is a bill enacted by the Government of Ontario that is notably unpopular. Many intelligent citizens and respected organizations have spoken up, concerned that it benefits only a handful of tract housing developers and their building-trades groups, and, eventually, the 50,000 or so families with means who will be able to afford suburban homes.

For the rest of us, it serves to destroy our natural heritage, weaken environmental protections and greatly increase the tax burden on property owners due to a drastic reduction of the fees that developers pay to municipalities for infrastructure services. This fee reduction, an unnecessary windfall for developers, will ultimately result in much higher property taxes, making homes even less affordable, even for those who now own them.

It's a bill so unpopular that it has brought together citizens of many political stripes, associations, unions, environmental groups such as ours, municipalities and other organizations—uncommon bedfellows, all. The Ontario government declined point blank to engage on Bill 23 with many, many groups representing the people they serve. That includes the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, a powerful group that the bill should ostensibly serve directly, as well as Ontario's First Nations, who have a legal right to consultation before the fact.

What recourse do we, the people, have to protect our environment and our ability to house ourselves affordably if a majority government can push through such damaging legislation, a Bill that its citizenry so clearly does not want?

Our hopes lie with Ontario's First Nations. As the Chiefs of Ontario wrote on November 23rd, "First Nations are not stakeholders; we are sovereign Nations and are entitled to proper consultation based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and mutual respect."

Let us hope that First Nations, under the provincial leadership of Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare, will take some action against this damaging legislation. Any help they might need, our small grassroots environmental organization will be glad to offer, with thanks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl Michener", is positioned above the typed name.

Carl Michener
President
Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation