

February 26, 2019



Ontario's Obsolete Approach to Planning

At a time when both the planet and south-central Ontario appear to be approaching various tipping points related to greenhouse gas emissions, access to clean water, and food security, the Province has turned its vision for development from the future to the past.

The onslaught began with [Bill 66](#), which sought to allow municipalities a license to ignore the Greenbelt Act, the Clean Water Act, the civil right of public notice and consultation, and the legal right to appeal in order to develop secret bylaws to approve new employment lands, when Ontario has an inventory of more than 16,000 hectares zoned and ready as employment lands. The public hue and cry against an unnecessary effort to convert additional agricultural land and greenspace led to an announcement that the government would withdraw the offending sections of Bill 66. **It has not yet done so.**

Next came consultations on a [housing strategy](#). The consultations were focused on five areas in which housing needed improvement: the speed of approvals, the mix of available housing choices, housing costs, access to rental housing, and innovation. The OHI asked four questions, seeking to know if the government had:

- Data that demonstrates any existing or pending shortage of housing lands;
- Data on key land classifications where new housing lands may be located – eg: by either expediting construction on existing housing lands, converting employment lands to housing lands, or converting agricultural lands;
- Material that demonstrates how much time can be saved in various changes to the approvals process to get from a development application to say 10% new home occupancy rates; and,
- Projections in end price cost savings for new homes under various scenarios under a proposed new housing strategy.

The answer to our request was: thank you for writing.

More recently, the government announced its desire to amend the [Growth Plan](#), with comments due February 28. While the plan has some redeemable qualities, key negative aspects include allowing for urban expansion into greenspace, lowering density targets, and weakening or not pursuing natural heritage and agricultural system mapping and related policy initiatives. This, like the other initiatives, casts planning as a quantitative exercise where people will only be able to balance home prices with commute times rather than make a qualitative investment in a community where people want to live. You can see our submission [here](#).

Rather than take a progressive and conservative approach to planning, the Ontario government is turning the clock back at least 15 years, abandoning its responsibility for environmental protection, food security, sustainable planning, complete communities, employment for the 21st century, and social and economic well-being.

The OHI urges the government to do better.

Andrew

Andrew McCammon

Executive Director

416 231 9484