



Official Opposition · l'Opposition officielle

Ontario NDP Caucus • Groupe parlementaire du NPD de l'Ontario

Nick Stavropoulos
Acting Auditor General of Ontario

Tyler Schulz
Assistant Auditor General, Commissioner of the Environment

Office of the Auditor General of Ontario
20 Dundas Street West, Suite 1530
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2C2

Dear Mr. Stavropoulos and Mr. Schulz

The former Auditor General of Ontario Bonnie Lysyk's report revealed evidence that certain favoured developers received preferential treatment with respect to the selection of lands to be removed from the Greenbelt.

Unfortunately, there is evidence of similar preferential treatment with respect to other site-specific land use planning decisions as well.

The Integrity Commissioner's August 30, 2023 report on Steve Clark revealed that certain developers or lobbyists with special access to officials in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing inappropriately influenced decisions concerning the ministry's reviews of municipal official plans, and were able to further their private interests as a result.

In many cases the ministerial changes to OPs, including mandated urban boundary expansions, evidently conflicted with provincial policy and the recommendations of professional staff planners in municipalities such as Hamilton, Ottawa, Waterloo, York, Peel, Niagara, Peterborough, Halton and Wellington.

There is also evidence that certain landowners have benefitted from preferential treatment with respect to the issuance of Minister's Zoning Orders, which can increase the value of a property by an order of magnitude, without requiring the construction of a single new home. Some landowners have recently been caught attempting to sell land, mostly unchanged, for many times what they paid for the land, after receiving an MZO.

We are now asking that your office conduct a value-for money audit and assessment of the financial and environmental impacts of the government's amendments to municipal official plans, its issuance of Minister's Zoning Orders and ministerial orders under section 34.1 of the Planning Act, as well as other land use planning decisions affecting specific properties.

We ask that your office specifically consider whether such decisions were evidence-based and consistent with provincial plans, policies and statutes, as well as their impact on the smooth functioning of municipal and provincial planning and approval processes. We also ask that you investigate whether the decision-making process adhered to standards of conduct expected of officials in a position of public trust, including standards concerning conflicts of

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interest and preferential treatment. Finally, we also ask that you determine how much wealth was transferred to affected property owners as a result of such decisions, and whether this transfer was in the public interest.

In the wake of your office's special report on the Greenbelt and the Integrity Commissioner's report, we believe it is necessary to investigate the overall integrity of the land use planning system, and site-specific ministerial decisions in particular. We thank you for your time in reviewing our request and would be happy to meet with you and your team to further discuss our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marit Stiles".

Marit Stiles
Leader of the Official Opposition
MPP, Davenport

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Burch".

Jeff Burch
MPP, Niagara Centre

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandy Shaw".

Sandy Shaw
MPP, Hamilton West- Ancaster-
Dundas