

Town, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, issue joint statement on Bill 23]

Caledon, MCFN share concerns with Bill

By Zachary Roman

The Town of Caledon and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) have come together to voice shared concerns about Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster act.

On April 10, the Town announced it had released a joint statement with MCFN outlining these shared worries about the impacts of the Bill. Doug Ford's Progressive Conservatives passed Bill 23 on November 28, 2022, amid criticism from municipalities, conservation authorities, and citizens.

The Town of Caledon has had a history of being opposed to the Bill.

On November 25, 2022, Caledon Mayor Annette Groves called an emergency meeting of Caledon Council to discuss Bill 23. At the meeting, Council unanimously voted to ask the province to halt Bill 23 and begin fulsome consultation with all municipalities on local impacts.

In the April 10, 2023 statement, the Town and MCFN said Bill 23 proposes changes that will severely impact environmental protection and heritage preservation.

The Province has amended the Greenbelt Plan and re-designated lands in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, anticipating future development of at least 50,000 new homes on the affected lands, reads the statement. These changes may impact key natural features in the Greenbelt, affect farmland and ecosystems and set a precedent that environmentally protected lands can be opened for development.

Additionally, the Town and MCFN are worried changes to the Ontario Heritage Act will impact the ability of municipalities to protect their cultural heritage.

Of particular concern to the Town and MCFN is the Province's lack of consultation with Indigenous communities, especially MCFN, whose lands are significantly impacted by Bill 23.

Bill 23 removes the provincial government's duty to consult with and accommodate Indigenous Peoples, impacting MCFN's treaty rights, obligations and land claims, reads the statement.

According to the Town, Caledon Mayor Annette Groves raised all these concerns to Steve Clark, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, at the January 2023 Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference.

Groves expects that the Province will provide proper opportunities for consultation moving forward.

Chief Stacey LaForme of MCFN said the Province must consult and collaborate with his community and others impacted by the Bill's changes.

The government has obligations to the people and our mother, the earth, said LaForme.