

MVCA - Media Release - November 14, 2022

Bill 23 Erodes Ontario's Natural Hazard Protection

The Province's *More Homes Built Faster Act* asks taxpayers to subsidize development while removing fundamental controls over the protection of people and property from floods and drought.

Bill 23 aims to facilitate the building of 1.5 million new homes in Ontario over the next 10 years. While the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) supports this objective, many of the proposed changes put homeowners in harm's way for decades to come.

Natural Hazard regulations

Although Conservation Authorities (CAs) have been providing cost-efficient, watershed-wide natural hazard protection for more than 70 years, Bill 23 seeks to:

- download responsibilities to already-overburdened municipalities, including assessing water quality and ecological impacts, establishing and enforcing waterfront setbacks, and evaluating wetlands.
- exempt some development activities from needing any natural hazard permits;
- prohibit consideration of land conservation and pollution control by CAs, which would remove the ability to protect natural resources that support existing residents and recreational tourism;
- alter the provincial wetland evaluation system to reduce the number and extent of these natural water reservoirs; and

Cumulatively, these changes will have significant downstream impacts for homeowners in the form of increased risk of flooding, erosion and landslides, poorer surface and drinking water quality, loss of tourism and recreation opportunities, and higher homeownership costs in the form of increased insurance premiums, flood damages and emergency response.

"These changes should concern everyone," said MVCA General Manager Sally McIntyre. "Downloading the cost of development onto municipalities will limit their ability to maintain affordable rate increases and deliver other programs and services. Eroding the size and number of wetlands upstream will affect everyone downstream. Now is not the time to be reducing these natural water reservoirs and carbon sinks."

MVCA urges the Province to undertake significant consultation with CAs, municipalities and taxpayers before passing Bill 23.

MVCA and the other 35 CAs are recognized as a cost-efficient, collaborative partner for municipalities and the development industry. We are committed to helping Ontario meet its housing goals by ensuring safe and sustainable development balances the needs of people and the environment, the economy and ecology.

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