



## More Farmland Lost Faster: What Bill 23 and Development on Greenbelt-protected Land Will Really Accomplish

Undemocratically pushed through before the window for public consultation had been closed, let alone considered, the legislative assembly passed Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster (2022) on November 28, 2022. The fight, however, is far from over. Since its announcement in early November, the NFU-O has banded together with provincial allies to lend our voice in protest and, most recently, to call for Bill 23's repeal.

**The NFU-O believes that Bill 23 and the select removal of Greenbelt land from protection is only beneficial for developers and land speculators.**

Premier Ford insists these changes are necessary to solve housing supply shortages and the affordability crisis.

He is being disingenuous. He's also wrong.

Instead of showing itself as a champion of farmers and farmland protection, the Ontario government, through Bill 23 and the proposed carving up of the Greenbelt, is not just condoning land-grabbing, they are accelerating farmland loss, speculation and ecosystem destruction for the benefit of corporate interests and at the expense of all Ontarians.

**The NFU-O believes that this Bill is a disaster for Ontarians in need of affordable housing, green planners and policy-makers, the farmers who grow our food, and for mitigating climate change and protecting sensitive wetlands, woodlands, rivers, streams, and wildlife habitat across the province.**

Bill 23 is a farmland-grabbing accelerant. It is a way to speed up corporate control of land, further increasing land prices and putting our local food supply at risk.

By abolishing the Growth Plan and weakening regional planning, Bill 23 removes essential policies designed to reduce urban sprawl and protect natural heritage and agricultural lands.

Permanently protecting agricultural land and natural heritage features (as is the intention of the Greenbelt Act) is crucial to mitigate climate change and ensure food security for Ontarians. Disruptions to long food supply-chains, increased transportation expenses, crop failure in other parts of the world, and the need to limit our use of carbon-based fuels, require us to protect our food security by increasing sustainably-produced, locally-grown food.

Instead of protecting our natural heritage, Bill 23 will balloon urban sprawl by abolishing coordinated regional planning in Ontario's Golden Horseshoe and potentially beyond. Bill 23 undermines the Growth Plan which balances growth with natural heritage and agricultural systems protection, reduces site plan control for many developments, and forces municipalities to expand their urban boundaries. Bill 23 ignores the fact that many city councils have democratically passed policies aimed at urban containment and encouraging smart, liveable density growth targets.

**The NFU-O believes Bill 23 must be repealed.**

The NFU-O is proud to be the voice at the table for farmers in the fight for farmland protections.

In just the past year alone, we've denounced the blatant misuse of Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) to bypass democratic land-use planning processes; we've spoken out against plans to build super highways that would increase harmful air pollution and carbon emissions, and destroy vital farmland; we've rejected proposals to limit and remove protections for at-risk species; and we've rebuked attacks on Conservation Authorities' power and authority intended to streamline irresponsible development at the cost of our food security and environmental health. The NFU-O has stood in

solidarity with "Stop the Sprawl" movements across the province and advocated the rejection of urban boundary expansion and we've called on the Ontario government to immediately present, debate, and pass legislation to prevent farmland grabbing and speculation in order to keep farmland in the hands of farmers.

This most recent threat to the Greenbelt, while wildly hypocritical, did not come as a surprise to environmental organizations and advocates on the ground who have seen this government dismantle decades of slow progress toward protecting Ontario's environment and creating more sustainable communities. The Ford government has painted one clear picture: they will prioritize irresponsible growth and development over all else.

The NFU-O joins its allies to advocate liveable cities and rural areas by exposing the false pretense that Bill 23 will meet the need for affordable housing by cutting "red-tape" and by handing environmentally and agriculturally protected land over to developers.

Farmland is a finite resource. Once it has been paved over, it is lost forever. We are already losing 319 acres of farmland per day. Yet there is still reason for hope.

We see hope in the crowds gathered at MPP offices across the province, instructing their elected officials, and Premier Ford, to keep their "hands off of the Greenbelt." We see hope in our members as they take up megaphones and microphones to raise their voices in the name of farmland protections. We see hope in the efforts of our allies who've rallied against Bill 23, urban sprawl, and other attacks on the Greenbelt and Ontario wild spaces, to demand fair and democratic land-use decision-making and to hold the provincial government accountable to their election promises.