

## **What is happening at Queen's Park – April 11, 2024**

Bill 185, currently known as the *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*, proposes amendments to various Acts with the aim of streamlining the development process to increase housing supply in Ontario. On April 11, this bill had its second reading. There are several concerning amendments that are being pushed forward, particularly related to the Planning Act concerning farmers and farmland, as well as the increased powers of the Ontario Land Tribunal. Bill 185 was originally named the Act to Amend Acts, where 15 different Acts with varying amendments were lumped together to clear “red tape” to build more housing in Ontario. This “red tape” is the voices of landowners, farmers and varying levels of protection that have been put in place to protect farming and food.

**Scope of Amendments:** The bill seeks to amend multiple Acts, including the Planning Act, with the overarching goal of expediting the approval process for residential and commercial developments.

### **Schedule 12 - Planning Act Amendments**

- **Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIAs)** - The proposed amendments allow municipalities to mandate AIAs for certain development projects that could affect agricultural operations or prime agricultural lands.
- **Criteria for AIAs** - The criteria for AIAs may include factors such as impacts on farming operations, soil quality, drainage, and agricultural resources availability.
- **Protection of Agricultural Land** - While aiming to balance housing needs with agricultural land preservation, the amendments give municipalities significant discretion in determining when AIAs are required and the specific criteria to be considered.
- **Consultation Requirement** - Municipalities are required to consult with agricultural organizations and stakeholders when considering the need for AIAs, aiming to ensure that farming community interests are considered.
- **Flexibility for Municipalities** - The amendments provide flexibility for municipalities in implementing AIAs, tailoring the process to local needs and circumstances.

### **Increased Powers of the Ontario Land Tribunal**

- The bill grants increased powers to the Ontario Land Tribunal, presumably to expedite the resolution of disputes related to land use planning and development.
- While this aims to streamline the process, concerns have been raised about the implications for farmers and farmland protection, as it may grant developers and government bodies more authority without sufficient consideration for agricultural interests.

### **Impact on Farmers and Farmland Protection**

- Concerns have been voiced that the amendments may disproportionately favor developers and various levels of government over farmers, potentially compromising the protection of high-quality and productive farmland.
- Critics argue that the bill lacks adequate consultation with farmers and does not sufficiently prioritize the preservation of farmland and soil quality.

### **Second Reading Debate – April 11, 2024**

During the second reading debate, Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) will discuss the implications of the bill, including its impact on farmers, farmland protection, and the balance between development and agricultural interests.

Overall, Bill 185 proposes amendments that aim to streamline the development process, but concerns have been raised regarding the potential negative impacts on farmers and farmland protection. Critics argue that the bill may prioritize development interests over agricultural sustainability and community consultation.