

# LOTS TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT

Ontario Premier Doug Ford didn't wait long before creating another stir within municipal government. This time it's not Toronto, but dozens of towns and cities left wondering what changes the province has in mind with the appointment of special advisers to review regional governments in order to make "better use of taxpayers' dollars."

Unlike Toronto's appalling experience, where council was slashed nearly in half in the middle of an election campaign, the province is starting with consultation this time. But once again, the Ford government has identified no specific problems with how all these municipalities are working, just the usual vague references to cutting red tape and finding efficiencies.

That's certain to create turmoil for big city regions like Halton, with politicians and staff scrambling to figure out what any of this will actually mean for them - good, bad, or perhaps in the end, not much at all.

But all that noise has already served to divert attention from another announcement the government made on recently to overhaul Ontario's growth plan.

And with this one, we do know what it means - and it's not good.

The government is dramatically rolling back the density targets brought in under the Liberals and encouraging urban sprawl with single-family homes that can't support public transit.

These changes, along with others in Bill 66, the government's wide-ranging omnibus legislation introduced last month, are bad news for protecting the Greenbelt, and more broadly the very principle of compact, sustainable growth.

The government's plan would take Ontario backwards by green-lighting urban sprawl once again and saddling future communities with neighbourhoods that have such low density they can't even support a bus service. That means long commutes and more gridlocked highways for everyone.

That's not to say this won't be a popular move. In some quarters, it's bound to be. That's because the Ford government is selling it as what's required to get more housing built.

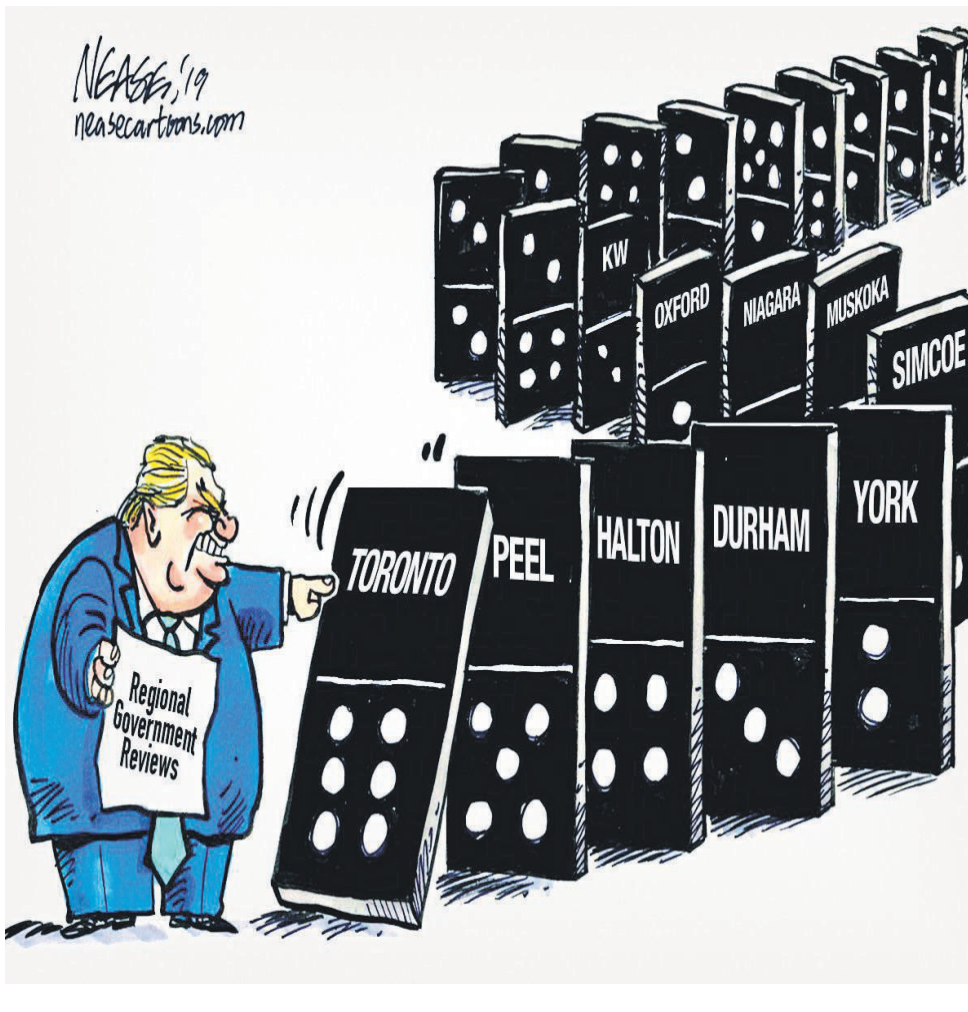
With the price of housing rising far faster than incomes, lots of people are being priced out of the housing market across the GTA and the whole Golden Horseshoe region. There certainly is a shortage of affordable housing, both ownership and rental.

And there's no shortage of developers who are quick to claim that those problems would be solved, if only the government would open up more land for development.

But it's just not true. There's plenty of land approved for development already.

Numerous reports have shown there's enough land already set aside for development to accommodate the housing needs of the Greater Golden Horseshoe region and its expected population growth for the next 20 years or more.

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## STRIVING FOR A HEALTHY BALANCE IN OUR DAILY LIVES

EACH DAY CAN BE DIFFERENT, WRITES MELANIE MCGREGOR



MELANIE MCGREGOR  
Column

"A healthy balance" is a term often heard when discussing mental health and wellness. But what does it really mean? What is "balance" and what makes it "healthy"?

Think about the number of things we manage in our lives on a regular basis: caring for ourselves, family, friends, hobbies, work, physical health, spirituality, thoughts, feelings - balance means giving the right amount of time and effort to each one.

Imagine that it's a busy

time at work and we're working more hours for a few days - that will take away time that we would normally devote to other areas of our life. It may lead to us feeling spread thin and missing things that we would usually do. Doing it for too long can have more major impacts on our wellness, and we may find ourselves feeling resentful, extra stressed, anxious, down and exhausted.

A "healthy balance" will be different for every one of us. Think of it as a pie: we each have one that represents all of our time, and the size of each slice of pie will vary from person to person. Maybe I like socializing more than you do, so time with friends and family will be a larger slice. Or maybe there's a slice that I don't have at all because it's not key to my personal balance.

We need to choose how we slice our pie carefully and pay attention to how it affects us. Say we choose to skip going for a walk for today and have a much-needed nap instead; if we're feeling a bit worn down, listening to our bodies and getting extra sleep may be key to our balance today. But if we skip that walk for a few days and are starting to feel a bit sluggish and restless, we need to think about slicing the pie differently and making time for some exercise.

Each day doesn't need to be identical. Key to identifying this is checking in with our thoughts, feelings and body to recognize signs that we need to rejig how we're spending our time. Then it's about giving ourselves permission to do just that and re-establish our healthy balance.

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