

PLAYING FIELD TILTS TOWARD DEVELOPERS

The Ontario Municipal Board has gone by several names since its creation in 1906. It changed again last year, to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, but now it is changing the way it operates.

The former Liberal government, in 2017, worried that the OMB was undermining local, municipal authority, began the reform process. The Ford government has finalized those changes by reverting to old OMB rules and what once had been an independent adjudicator for land-planning issues is now being seen as a patsy for developers.

In football, an end run is when a player tries to carry to ball around a defensive line. In Ontario politics, it's any time Doug Ford doesn't get his way.

Ontarians should not be surprised. Ford ran a development-friendly election campaign that would threaten the beloved Greenbelt. Faced with objections there, he backed off, but came back in January with proposed changes to municipal growth plans that he says will attract jobs, boost housing supply in southwestern Ontario and empower cities and towns to dictate how and where development occurs.

It was a recipe for sprawl then and, with the tabling recently of the More Homes, More Choice Act, is the proof in the pudding: The PC government of Doug Ford is anti-environment and pro-development. Had the Liberals under Kathleen Wynne retained power, would the tribunal be any different? It's hard to know. But the effect would almost certainly have been different. For several reasons.

The changes Ford's government announced in January roll back density targets, allowing greenfields where developers usually build single-family home subdivisions to be converted to homes for 40 people per hectare rather than the current 80.

The changes announced recently will affect 13 Ontario laws, including the Environmental Protection and Endangered Species acts and Ontario Heritage and Planning acts. More than 20 pages of wide-reaching changes to laws affecting Ontario flora and fauna were buried in the More Homes More Choices Act, Bill 108. Activists are calling the act a "doomsday scenario for endangered species in this province."

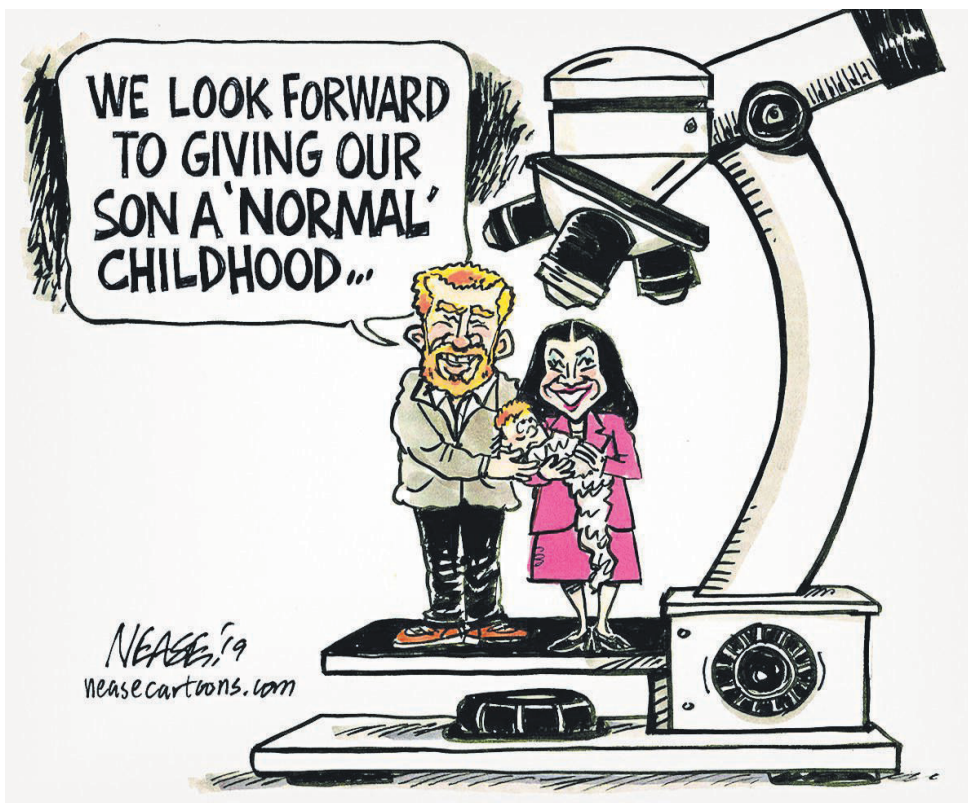
A 2013 study by the David Suzuki Foundation warned of the risks of urban sprawl to the farms, forests and wetlands in the Golden Horseshoe. With only five per cent of Canada's entire land base suitable for growing food and with the land under cities from Toronto to St. Catharines rich with soil needed for such growth, the foundation argued, it is irresponsible of the government to allow further urban sprawl.

The provincial housing minister, Steve Clark, says the changes will get more housing to market quicker, create a diversity of housing and grow supply of housing, so housing prices will be more affordable. He is right on the first two points, but the only way for housing to be made more affordable is for costs to come down and when does that ever happen?

Municipalities, already cash-strapped before Queen's Park started announcing cuts to education and health among other programs, will find it hard to resist the monies increased development will provide.

But resist they must.

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DURING PLAYTIME, LEADING IS LEARNING

SUPPORT CHILD'S CHOICES, WRITES ALISON HILBORN



ALISON HILBORN
Column

Have you ever watched your child playing happily away, completely enthralled and delighted? It's a wonderful thing to witness - a child engrossed in simple play, creating and learning.

To even count as play, an activity must be chosen and directed by your child. When children feel that freedom, they just relax and enjoy. They are alert and giving their full attention, which allows them to imagine and experiment easily. And this is when the best learning happens!

When your child is in

charge of how an activity will play out, she will feel motivated to keep going, using patience and persistence. Along the way, she will make decisions, solve problems she encounters, and demonstrate how innovative she is. These are important skills she needs to thrive at school and in life.

Sometimes we are tempted to choose activities that we most enjoy or to guide our child's play in ways that make sense to us. Remember to step back and ask yourself, am I letting my child bring his own ideas, use his skills, and try new things?

Early years professionals agree on the importance of the relationship between a parent and child. Your child loves playing with you! When you support his choices and let him put his ideas into action, your belief in his abilities gives him confidence and

motivates him to keep learning.

If playdough is the activity of the day, let your child create a scene based on her interests and experiences. Will she choose a construction site or a beach? When playing quiz games, give your child a chance to quiz you, too. When you see your child getting frustrated, don't jump in right away - wait to see how he adjusts.

Connect and play every day and you'll enjoy watching your child take the lead and learn new things!

Next time: How Halton iparent helps

Alison Hilborn is the Our Kids Network Early Years Initiative chair and Acton Hub co-ordinator. Reach her at CPLE@haltoniparent.ca. Find more than 60 Connect Play & Learn Every Day activity ideas for children up to age six at haltoniparent.ca/CPLE. This column is based on information provided by Halton early years professionals. Halton has many helpful resources. If you have concerns about your child, contact a health-care provider.

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This newspaper, published every Thursday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 80 community publications across Ontario.

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