

TOWN CRITICIZES PROVINCIAL HOUSING BILL

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Halton Hills council has taken issue with the province and its bill aimed at increasing Ontario's supply and affordability of housing.

Town staff and council supported the goals of Bill 109, the More Homes for Everyone Act, but questioned the province's methods in achieving them.

In a presentation to council, Damian Szybalski, the town's director of economic development, innovation and culture, said Bill 109 could "have potential far-reaching financial implications on the municipality."

Among the most controversial elements was the province's requirement that municipalities refund application fees if a decision

on a building applications is not made within 120 days.

"If waived, there would be no alternate funding sources," said Jinsun Kim, the town's director of financial planning and budgets. "It would be refunded by existing taxpayers."

Kim also confirmed that there is nothing in the bill that requires developers to pass along the saving of the refunded fees to home purchasers.

"It's very good for developers," said Coun. Jane Fogal. "It's bad for municipal finances."

While the province's stated goal is to cut out red tape in the approval process, several councillors pointed out that many of the delays in the process are to meet provincial requirements such as environmental assessments.

Coun. Anne Lawlor said



Halton Hills council says Bill 109, meant to increase the province's housing supply, will hurt municipalities and not make homes more affordable.

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the 120-day timeline leaves little time for public input. She said Bill 109 is "gutting a public consultation process that is pretty important to

most municipalities and pretty fundamental to the planning processes that we've established over many, many years. I see it as

the province reaching down into the municipalities and forcing situations that may or may not actually improve and provide more

housing."

Jeff Markowiak, the town's director of development review, said it would require more staff resources in order to complete application reviews in the province's timelines. He added those timelines may lead to municipalities turning down more applications to avoid losing the fees. That could slow down the building of houses.

Mayor Rick Bonnette criticized the province for having no one representing municipalities on the task force that came up with the recommendations on which Bill 109 was based.

Fogal said the only people who benefit are the developers who get their fees returned. She said municipalities would lose money making it even tougher to keep up in providing recreation facilities and services for residents.

"There's nothing in it for the people who are struggling to put a roof over their heads," Fogal said.

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