

Excerpts from:

Committee Transcripts: Standing Committee on Social Policy - 2015-Nov-09 - Bill 73, Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, 2015

Source: http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/committee-proceedings/committee_transcripts_details.do?Date=2015-11-09&ParlCommID=9003&BillID=3176&Business=&locale=en&DocumentID=29751#P221_55440

[Mayor Burton of Oakville:]

The municipal tax levy in Oakville will still be carrying 6.5% to subsidize growth. I could do a lot if I wasn't subsidizing growth with 6.5% of my tax levy.

...

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mayor Burton [of Oakville].

One of the things that I like asking municipalities about this bill is, how much money is it worth, these changes? The changes to the development charges: How much more money will they add to paying for growth? Even the process changes: How much will they save your municipality in unnecessary costs for appeals at the OMB and so on? What would be the benefit to your bottom line?

Mr. Rob Burton: That's a delightful question. I asked our planning and finance staffs to calculate that. They came up with the answer that we would save about \$700,000 a year, and that's about half of 1% in terms of our levy, so it's significant, especially in a day when any municipality that raises its taxes more than the CPI gets a sharp look from the taxpayer. So it's a significant amount that we're being saved.

1450

On the other side of the balance, the change to parkland dedication is going to remove about \$6 million a year in revenue for the purpose of buying parkland, although that's offset by the fact that we can still require land. As I understand it, we're looking at this change because you want to incentivize us to take land, so—I pledge, I'll take land.

...

Mr. Rob Burton: No, sir. It's 6.5% of our tax levy subsidizes growth. If I wasn't required to subsidize growth, I could cut taxes by 6.5%.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: What would you suggest that we would change in the—or do you see it having enough change within Bill 73? Is it enough change to bring that to zero, so growth would pay for growth?

Mr. Rob Burton: Repeal the 1997 amendments to the Development Charges Act and we'll be fine. The cost of those amendments in 1997 is 6.5% of my tax levy.

Mr. Geoff Kettel [co-chair of the Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations]

...

The province can be helpful ... in directing the municipalities:

—to direct their C[ommittees] of A[djustment] to rigorously apply the four tests; and

—to ensure that they are prepared to defend and uphold their OPs and their zoning bylaws at the C of A and at the OMB;

—to ensure that sufficient properly qualified staff are assigned to support the committee of adjustment so that applications are properly reviewed; and

—to properly advise applicants about the Planning Act requirements with respect to minor variances; and

—finally, to ensure that all appointed C of A members are qualified and properly trained.

[Testimony of Mark Reusser, a farmer from Waterloo region and a director with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture:]

Mr. Percy Hatfield: And when we talk about growth and smart growth, how important should it be for us to recognize the evaporation, if you will, of farmland in Ontario?

Mr. Mark Reusser: I'll answer that. It's approximately 350 acres per day, every single day, in Ontario. Ontario's arable land constitutes only 5% of the land area of the province. If we want to continue to have land that produces food for our citizens, we need to protect that land. Simple as that. You can't farm rocks up in northern Ontario.

...

Mr. Percy Hatfield: But if we're losing 350 acres a day of arable farmland—I mean, obviously not sustainable—how do we stop it?

Mr. Mark Reusser: It takes a strong government to stop it and laws that are enforced, and, I think, acknowledgement by the citizens of Ontario that farmland is a non-renewable natural resource and needs to be treated as such.