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BILL 51: Changes to Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) & Planning Act
Is the Provincial Government really giving Toronto's residents what we need?

The provincial government will be hearing from anyone concerned with the proposed changes to the Planning Act and the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) very soon. The changes, contained in Bill 51, have the potential to affect all of us here in St. Paul's.

Bill 51 needs refining in more ways than one. After years of meetings with local residents and MPPs, these proposed changes to the legislation governing city planning in Toronto still allow the provincially appointed, quasi-judicial OMB to overturn the decisions of the City Council of Toronto. I believe City Council is able to make these decisions on its own with the advice from its sophisticated planning department and most importantly, direct, local input from its population that exceeds that of 8 of Canada's 13 provinces & territories. In fact, why not abolish the OMB for Toronto?

In St. Paul's, I value your input above all else and I vote accordingly. Having the OMB's veto looming over our decision-making undermines City Council's autonomy and reduces the value of my vote made on your behalf. City Council needs to be able to firmly say that a development is detrimental for the neighbourhood and by extension, detrimental for the City as a whole, without the threat of the developer appealing City Council's decision to the OMB for their subjective judgment. The OMB frequently ignores the context of the proposed development and this is leading us into foreseeable problems such as inadequate infrastructure (i.e.- transit, water & sewers), inadequate sunlight access, parking issues, and gridlock on our roads.

In my experience, I see the following changes that need to be included in Bill 51:

- OMB should be an advisory board only;
- New evidence by residents should be allowed at OMB appeal hearings and new evidence by the developer should be disallowed;
- OMB decisions should be "consistent with" municipal council decisions and Official Plans, not only "have regard to";
- OMB decisions must take into account the cumulative citywide economic and environmental impact as well as the precedent-setting nature of development proposals;
- Minimum densities on private property should not be set by the municipality or by the Province; et cetera.

You can find a copy of Bill 51 and other information at www.michaelwalker.ca or contact my office at 416-392-7906 or councillor_walker@toronto.ca.

Please contact your MPP Michael Bryant to tell him what you think of the proposed changes (mbryant.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org or 416-656-0943). To appear before the Provincial Committee on this issue, please contact the clerk at 416-325-7340.