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## Dropping proposed legislation shows province listening, county planning manager says

Jason Bain Examiner Staff Writer

**D**ropping a controversial element of proposed legislation that may have opened the protected Greenbelt to development is proof Ontario is paying attention, Peterborough County planning director Bryan Weir said.

"It's good to hear the provincial government is listening. They have their eyes open and mind clear," he said Thursday after news broke that Ontario will not move forward with Schedule 10 of Bill 66 - Restoring Ontario's Competitive Act.

Municipal Affairs Minister Steve Clark said the government is abandoning plans to create a specialized tool for municipalities that would have allowed them to override certain laws in some cases, such as those that protect the Greenbelt.

Critics have panned Bill 66 for vague language that seemed to put protections established by previous governments at risk.

Peterborough Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society president Sheryl Smith wrote Peterborough-Kawartha MPP Dave Smith expressing "deep concern and opposition" to the proposed legislation.

The schedule gives away existing pro-

tections of natural heritage areas such as the Oak Ridges Moraine, making it easier for municipalities to bypass the Planning Act to approve developments without public notice or the possibility of appeals, she said.

Weir has also heard concerns from groups including the agri-food sector, which believed the new law could allow development on prime agricultural land.

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute has voiced concerns the law could usurp the logical, local planning process in which municipalities identify growth areas before investing in supportive infrastructure, he pointed out.

Dropping Schedule 10 gives Weir confidence moving forward that the province won't demonstrate a one-size-fits all mentality, something the institute encouraged in response to the proposed legislation.

"I'm hoping it's something they will keep in mind when they make proposed legislative changes," he said.

New city infrastructure and planning services commissioner Cynthia Fletcher could not be reached for comment.

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