



Ste. 146, 207 Bank Str., Ottawa ON K2P 2N2

March 19, 2024

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria

Minister of Transportation
5th Floor, 777 Bay Str.
Toronto ON, M7A 2J3

Dear Minister:

Bill 162, Get It Done Act, 2024

On behalf of the Federation of Citizens Associations (FCA – representing 73 community groups in Ottawa) we are writing to you to oppose the City of Ottawa's request to modify the City's Official Plan with regard to height limits in minor corridors.

Over the last years, Ottawa City Council took enormous pains to engage the public in developing Ottawa's Official Plan - the document that is to guide Ottawa's growth for the next 25 years. The issues were significant - should Ottawa intensify to meet housing demand or expand outwards. The FCA and its members were encouraged to participate and did participate in the development of the City's Official Plan. City Council, after much public input and debate, adopted a hybrid approach in finalizing its Official Plan - supporting intensification established neighbourhoods (example: raising height limits in minor corridors to 4 storeys) and designating new land outside the urban boundary for development.

There was much consternation, however, when the former Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing Stephen Clark unilaterally modified the City of Ottawa's Official Plan by adding additional lands for urban expansion, as well as raising height limits from 4 to 9 storeys in minor corridors to allow for more intensification. Other municipalities experienced similar modifications by the then Minister.

Following the provincial Auditor-General's report showing undue developer influence guided modifications to the City of Ottawa's Official Plan and official plans for other municipalities, Minister Clark resigned and you, Minister Callandra, brought in legislation (*Bill 150 - Planning Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)*) to walk back these imposed modifications to official plans, including Ottawa's. We (the FCA) supported this move.

However, at its November 22, 2023 meeting Ottawa City Council walked-on and approved a motion at its meeting asking you as Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing to re-instate the higher height limits of up to 9 storeys that Minister Clark imposed over the 4 storey height limit that Council had originally approved last year, without any attempt at public consultation on this higher height limit!

The FCA had participated in the City's Official Plan process in good faith. When we saw this walk-on motion regarding higher height limits in minor corridors, we wrote to City Council immediately asking that the motion be referred to the City's Planning & Housing Committee for public input. The issue of height limits and intensification in established neighbourhoods is a major issue to residents and this motion was a significant departure from what Council agreed to last year. Unfortunately, our request was ignored.

We are asking not to approve Schedule 3, Item 8 of the Bill 162 for the following reasons:

1. Council's request does not follow the procedures outlined in the Planning Act regarding the initiation and disposition of amendments to Official Plans, in particular the requirement to give notice of such an amendment and to provide opportunity for the public to comment prior to a decision being made on such an amendment. In this case there was no notice and no opportunity for the public to comment on this unexpected initiative at a Council and/or Council committee meeting.
2. The issue of the appropriate level of intensification for the City of Ottawa was well debated in the months leading up to the final approval of the City's Official Plan in 2022. The FCA supported placing more onus in the Official Plan on intensification to reach the City's population and housing targets rather than on urban sprawl. We supported proposals for intensification along major rapid transit corridors and along major arterials. However, for minor corridors in established neighbourhoods we supported setting an upper limit of 4 storeys for appropriate intensification here. This is what City Council approved last year in its Official Plan.

Due process is an important principle in evidence-based decision-making. Thank you for your attention to our request.

Yours truly,

Robert Brinker
President
Federation of Citizens Associations