

**Ontario Place Protectors**  
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**OPP Citizens' Group launches Court Challenge to New Deal for Toronto Act, 2023, Bill 154**

Wednesday morning, minutes before Royal Assent was granted for the New Deal for Toronto Act, an application for Judicial Review of Bill 154 was launched in the Ontario Divisional Court by the citizens group, Ontario Place Protectors (OPP). Contrary to its misleading name, Bill 154 has little to do with a new deal for Toronto. Rather, its focus is on giving the Ontario government unfettered authority to do as it pleases at Ontario Place, including it appears breaking the law.

The Bill exempts the government from adhering to Provincial Heritage laws as well as Environmental laws, and it enables it to also ignore Ontario's Growth Plan, the Environmental Bill of Rights, and the Provincial Policy Statement. It is intended to pave the way for destruction of the cultural landscape of Ontario Place and enables the Province to require that the local municipality also provide the project with whatever it might need, including new roads, water treatment facilities, and other infrastructure.

As well, it exempts Premier Ford and his government from any liability for "acts of bad faith", "malfeasance", or failure to meet any "fiduciary obligations" – or any other conduct that is intentionally unlawful, thereby preventing citizens from challenging any government action. It sweepingly overrides effectively every relevant Provincial law concerning Ontario Place.

OPP believes the Provincial Government is clearly breaching the principles of public trust. Bill 154 does not accord with the rule of law, eliminates the right to virtually all claims and/or challenges that could be brought against the government, and does not comport with the rules of natural justice and procedural fairness.

Bill 154 was pushed through the Ontario Legislature at breakneck speed: the second and third readings, along with a motion preventing public input were all passed on the same day. There were no committee hearings; there was no opportunity for any member of the public to be heard.

"Our client believes these breaches of fundamental legal principles are so egregious that it is launching this lawsuit", says lawyer Eric Gillespie. "Taking such extraordinary powers for the particularly frivolous purpose of clearing the way for an unwanted and unnecessary spa/waterpark owned by a foreign, for-profit corporation with a still secret 95-year lease on public lands simply cannot go unchallenged. Bill 154 is a complete negation of the laws meant to protect every Ontario resident and their most basic democratic rights. It is our client's intent to see Bill 154 declared unlawful and of no force or effect."

OPP believes that if the Province is permitted to proceed with its project using the terms laid out in this Bill, it will effectively be able to do whatever it wants to do at any time, anywhere in the Province, using whatever means it chooses. This is clearly unacceptable in a democratic society.

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