



SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

BULLETIN

ARE WE SEEING BRASS KNUCKLE CAPITALISM BY THE FORD GOVERNMENT?

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Ordinary citizens and municipally elected officials in ordinary towns are starting to get sick of the Ford government's favoritism of long-term care companies with terrible track records like Southbridge and are fighting back (Davis, 2023). This government is giving more beds and 30-year licenses to print money to some of the worst corporations in Ontario (Oved et al, 2022).

Ford Government Issues MZO in Favor of Southbridge's Orchard Villa In Pickering

In Pickering, after over 70 people died in its Orchard Villa facility, the military had to be called in, and families of the dead launched a class action lawsuit against the company, it is barrelling ahead with plans to build a 15-storey human warehouse when it could not seem to properly staff a one storey institution (Thompson, 2020).

It is getting help from its friends in the Ford government. Not only did this government raise the bar for families seeking redress for their loved ones' deaths because of neglect in these facilities, but now, thanks to Premier Ford and his Cabinet, they have to prove gross negligence – a higher bar (CBC News, 2020).

Families are opposed to Southbridge's plans to build a human warehouse in the sky in Pickering, but Southbridge got considerable help from the Ford government to do exactly that when it issued a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) to force the City to accept Southbridge's plans (Durham Radio News, 2023).

The Pickering City Council in a unanimous show of support for the families of the dead voted no to the MZO. "It was a hard "no" from Pickering council when it learned the owner of a long-term-care home where 78 people died during the COVID-19 pandemic wants to rebuild and expand." (Callis, 2023).

The Minister did not take long to attack Pickering Council publicly saying he was disappointed.

Port Hope Becomes Ground Zero in the Citizen Fight Against Southbridge

Port Hope was the next town to be ground zero in the fight to stop Southbridge. Citizens there launched a major battle to prevent Southbridge building a huge institution in the heart of their historic district. Port Hope Council voted to support those who elected them

and designated its historic hospital that served World War 1 soldiers from 1913 a heritage site, denying Southbridge's plans to demolish the hospital and build a 7-storey human warehouse there.

Southbridge's and the Ontario government's response was to hammer the town and its citizens with an MZO and apply for a demolition permit for the old hospital (Municipality of Port Hope, 2023).

Some local residents made poignant pleas to their Council to do what SSAO has long been recommending - ask the Ontario government to partner with them to build real, humane, and respectful community residential alternatives (See presentation from Celia McBride on SSAO's YouTube channel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_X6D9w7cHLA)

The Council voted with the residents to deny the demolition permit that Southbridge was requesting (Hyatt, 2023).

Minister Calandra did not take long to attack the Port Hope Councilors who voted no as NIMBY and threatened additional actions to bring the town and its citizens into line.

MZO's In Favor of Southbridge Issued in Three Municipalities

The Ford government issued MZO's in Pickering, Port Hope, and in Ottawa to aid Southbridge. "Ontario has used its powers to push through the redevelopment of three long-term care homes run by a company accused of serious mismanagement during the pandemic, including widespread deaths in its facilities." (Casey, 2023).

Ottawa Council has expressed serious concerns as well (Glowacki, 2023).

Brass Knuckle Capitalism by the Ford Government?

These vicious attacks on municipal councils by Ford government Ministers on behalf of a large long-term care limited partnership company with a bad track record represents a significant departure from the days when the provincial government respected duly elected local Councilors and worked in partnership with them.

What we seem to be seeing now is an Ontario government engaging in brass knuckle capitalism in support of its friends in a disgraced long-term care industry.

The question is why? Why would Premier Ford and his Ministers be literally going to the wall to help a company like Southbridge while attacking local citizens in provincial PC ridings and their elected officials?

You be the judge.

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