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“When fast-tracking leads to bad decision-making. Southdale / Eisner Cove Wetland.”

“There is a lot of pressure on all levels of government to solve the current housing shortage,” said Bill Zebedee, President of the Save Our Southdale Wetland Society, “but in its haste to fast-track, the Provincial government has abandoned all caution and any pretence of caring about local or environmental concerns.”

Zebedee added, the 5-person Housing Task Force is able to make recommendations to Minister John Lohr, without any of the analysis, assessments or consultations that would normally take place.

“They have taken the planning and approvals process away from the municipal government, and the voice away from citizens,” said Susan Van Iderstine. “Even Councillor Sam Austin believes the province is stepping on the toes of HRM.”

“What the Province is doing here is so fundamentally wrong It is the biggest intrusion into municipal responsibilities since the forced amalgamation of HRM over 25 years ago. Quick question for all of you. How many planners do you think the Province has in Municipal Affairs? Shout me a number. Three in Municipal Affairs for the whole Province. HRM has over 100 planners. We have the expertise here, not them, but yet they’re dictating planning. The tail is firmly wagging the dog here and the tail has a not a clue what it’s doing.” – *Councillor Sam Austin, Support Rally for Eisner Cove Wetland, April 9, 2022*

Van Iderstine added, it is bad news for the Eisner Cove Wetland / Southdale development, because it is very early in the planning process.

“The pre-work done by the developer is riddled with inconsistencies, errors and omissions,” said Zebedee, “and their “plans” are changing frequently.” Zebedee is worried, without the oversight of a planning department, mistakes will remain unaddressed, and they can have serious consequences. Here are some of the more notable problems with the developers’ submissions:

- **Only part of the development has been documented.**
- The **number of units** keeps changing.
- The **size of the property varies** from report to report.
- The **Traffic Impact Assessment does not detail any impact on the surrounding residential streets. Its estimates of trips into and out of the development are highly questionable.**
- The **road crossing the wetland** has changed from an elevated roadway to ground-level.
- **Insufficient research on Species at Risk.**

Zebedee is hoping people sit up and pay attention to the actions of the Minister of Housing. “The Province will fast-track itself right past these and all other concerns, as they have decided this development will be shovel-ready by September. And nobody, not the city council, not the MLAs, and certainly not the residents, will have a voice in the matter. The Task Force only meets with developers.”

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