

## Ontario won't allow homes to be built on floodplains, Ford says after fed warning



A hiker passes through along a trail amidst a grove of poplar trees at the Rouge Urban National Park, in Toronto, Tuesday, June 15, 2021. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Giordano Ciampini

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CLARINGTON, Ont. - Ontario has no plans to allow homes to be built on floodplains, Premier Doug Ford said Friday after the federal environment minister warned Ottawa would not provide disaster compensation where development is greenlit in areas prone to flooding.

Ford said it's the responsibility of any builder to ensure they protect against development on floodplains.

"I encourage the federal minister to do his research," Ford said at an unrelated news conference. "Maybe I'll call him and inform him of what's going on."

In an interview with The Canadian Press, Guilbeault had said some of the lands where housing or commercial development is being proposed in Ontario are in floodplains, and flooding is the top climate change cost in Canada.

"I'm very worried by what I'm seeing in Ontario," Guilbeault said this week.

“The idea that the federal government will continue to compensate people where their provincial government deliberately allowed them to go and build housing units in an area that is prone to flooding is nonsense.”

Guilbeault's comments came after the Ontario government announced plans last month to open up the protected Greenbelt to development.

The Progressive Conservative government has proposed removing land from 15 different areas of the Greenbelt so that 50,000 homes can be built, while adding acres elsewhere.

A spokesperson for Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Steve Clark said Ontario has not received financial assistance for a flood in more than 15 years and rarely gets funding under the federal government's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements.

“Undertaking natural hazard mitigation is a standard part of any development and Ontario's preventative approach of directing development away from floodplains and other hazardous areas is highly effective,” Victoria Podbielski wrote in a statement.

Ontario created the Greenbelt in 2005 to protect agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands in the Greater Golden Horseshoe area from development.

Ford had previously promised he wouldn't touch the protected land, but his government now says the plan to open up the Greenbelt will help with its goal of building 1.5 million homes in 10 years.

Both Ford and his housing minister have said the provincial government did not tip off developers ahead of announcing changes to the Greenbelt after media reports suggested that some prominent developers who are Progressive Conservative donors stand to benefit from the move.

Ontario's integrity commissioner and the province's auditor general have been asked to investigate the government's Greenbelt plan.

- *With files from Bob Weber in Edmonton*