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QUEEN'S PARK – Dr. Adil Shamji, Ontario Liberal Leadership Candidate, MPP for Don Valley East and Ontario Liberal Critic for Health, Northern Development, Indigenous Affairs, and Colleges and Universities, issued the following statement in response to the Auditor General of Ontario's Special Report on Changes to the Greenbelt:

“It is often said that where there is smoke there is fire, but with this damning indictment of the Ford Conservatives' misconduct surrounding changes to the Greenbelt, it is clear we are bearing witness to neither smoke nor fire, but a blazing inferno of government malpractice and political favouritism.

“Doug Ford repeatedly promised that the only way to meet his government's target of building 1.5 million homes was to carve up the Greenbelt and develop urban sprawl on protected agricultural lands that were meant to assure the sustenance of future generations.

“The Auditor General's report confirmed what we feared to be true: dismantling the Greenbelt was not at all necessary to build affordable homes. Instead, this scheme merely increased the value of land owned by the Premier's friends without creating housing in the places it is needed.

“Doug Ford thinks the rules don't apply to him. His Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark, has shown he can't be trusted to act in the best interest of Ontarians. With the revelations of the Auditor General's report laid bare, the people of Ontario can now see Doug Ford and Steve Clark for who they really are.

“Everything about this process was flawed. Almost every decision along the way is financially benefitting a handful of developers whose land was selected for removal from the Greenbelt. Precious agricultural land has lost its protected status, and the land supposedly meant to replace it is not nearly as fertile. As a result, our farmers suffer, our children suffer, our environment suffers, and our democracy suffers.

“Ontarians grapple with the realities of this housing crisis daily. They deserve a transparent and trustworthy government that is working in their interest alone. Today, the Auditor General has confirmed that this is not the case under Doug Ford.

“The Premier must halt development in the Greenbelt and demand the resignation of his Housing Minister.”

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