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Durham Region's sprawl-friendly politicians have become notorious for their pro-development ways, but they've begun backing off in response to provincial pressure. They need to retreat still further.

Provincial officials have demanded 113 changes to the region's badly flawed growth plan. Some are negotiable, but it is essential that Queen's Park defend fundamental protections provided through the Places to Grow Act. "If they don't stand by it," warned Ajax Mayor Steve Parish, "it will be a signal, not only to Durham but to everyone in the province, that they're not serious about this legislation."

Durham is fielding a revamped growth strategy, to be debated by the region's planning committee Tuesday, accepting 36 of the province's points. Especially notable is Durham's abandonment of an in-house forecast predicting it would get 25,000 more jobs by 2031 than projected by the province. More jobs would require more development. Staff, however, advised that Queen's Park would in no way accept the region's numbers and urged retreat.

Discussions are underway with ministry officials to thrash out other disagreements. But the region is still adamantly opposing 32 changes sought by the province. Most objectionable is Durham's insistence on a new growth area in northeast Pickering. "That has really not been modified in any significant degree," Parish said. And it mustn't be allowed to stand.