

# DEPUTATION REQUEST

SPECIAL REGIONAL COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

**Subject:** Employment Designation – Buttonville Airport

**Spokesperson:** Peter Van Loan

**Name of Group or person(s) being represented (if applicable):** Cadillac Fairview

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**Brief summary of issue or purpose of deputation:**

Request that land not be designated Employment, and that current site specific policy in Region Official Plan be maintained.

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

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September 15, 2020

BY EMAIL  
regionalclerk@york.ca

Regional Council  
Region of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Attention: Regional Clerk

Dear Sirs/Medames:

**Re: Buttonville Airport Lands  
Planning For Employment and Employment Conversions  
Public Meeting – September 17, 2020**

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We act for CF/OT Buttonville Properties LP with regard to the above-captioned matter. **We are requesting that Regional Council NOT proceed with the proposed new designation of the Buttonville Airport as Employment land. The York Region Official Plan has a site specific policy governing development of the lands. We are asking that this STATUS QUO not be changed, and the existing policy remain in place.**

The Buttonville Airport lands have long been the subject of a planning process contemplating the redevelopment of the site for a wide range and mix of urban uses, including significant employment uses in a mixed-use, complete community setting. This is supported by an existing policy in the Regional Official Plan, Provincial Growth Plan Policy and several decisions by the Council of Markham.

In contrast, the proposal in the mapping of the report before Regional Council proposes to designate the Buttonville lands as Employment. This proposal is inconsistent with the history and policies applicable to the site.

Province Has Removed Buttonville from Provincially Significant Employment Zone Designation

In the recently revised Growth Plan mapping of Provincially Significant Employment Zones, Area 7 (404-407 Markham), the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has removed the subject lands from the Provincially Significant Employment Zone designation. This Provincial decision reflects the understanding of the Province that the future use of the Buttonville lands will and should be for a mix of urban uses.

This Provincial decision to not designate the lands as Provincially Significant Employment Zone, constitutes part of the Province's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. A Regional decision designate the Buttonville lands as only Employment would not be consistent with the Growth Plan.

Airport Operation is Anticipated to End

In April 2009, the Greater Toronto Airport Authority ceased funding to the Buttonville Airport, bringing into question its long-term viability. At this time, Toronto Airways Limited indicated that it would attempt to run the airport for "as long as it makes economic sense". The owners have indicated an intention to redevelop the airport lands "to a higher use" after the airport operations cease.

York Region Official Plan Policy already Contemplates Mix of Uses at a Redeveloped Buttonville Site

Regional Policy incorporates this dual aspect of the airport use and its uncertain future. The York Region Official Plan now includes a specific policy applicable to the Buttonville Airport lands.

"7.2.92 THAT THE BUTTONVILLE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT LANDS ARE DESIGNATED FOR BUSINESS PARK USE, IN THE CITY OF MARKHAM OFFICIAL PLAN, INCLUDING PERMISSION TO OPERATE AN AIRPORT. WHEN AIRPORT OPERATIONS AT THE BUTTONVILLE AIRPORT CEASE, THE SIGNIFICANT MAJORITY OF THE SUBJECT LANDS SHALL BE RETAINED FOR BUSINESS PARK USE, AND THE BALANCE FOR A MIX OF URBAN USES. THE CITY OF MARKHAM, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE REGION, WILL DETERMINE THE DETAILS OF THE FUTURE USE OF THOSE LANDS THROUGH AN IMPLEMENTING SECONDARY PLAN PROCESS".

"THE RE-USE OF THE AIRPORT SITE IS INTENDED TO GENERATE A RANGE OF QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPAND UPON THE NUMBER OF JOBS PLANNED FOR THE SITE".

This policy reflects a highly urban, wide range mix of uses for the site in the future – including employment.

City of Markham Encourages a Long Term Change of the Land Use on Site

The City of Markham has, by Council resolution, adopted a planning report that foresees redevelopment of the site for a mix of uses once the Buttonville Airport operation ceases which remains before the Ontario Municipal Board at this time.

The City of Markham has conducted a Planning Study in response to the proposal from CF/OT Buttonville Properties LP for the redevelopment of the Buttonville Airport lands for a mix of urban uses. Planning staff endorsed the redevelopment of the site for urban uses.

The Planning Report summarizes the redevelopment proposal as follows:

“The proposed redevelopment of Buttonville Airport comprises an employment and high density mixed-use district”.

This represented a significant progression from the previous designation of this site for Industrial – Business Park”.

This stands as clear evidence of the City of Markham position contemplating and supporting a mix of uses on the Buttonville lands.

York Region Staff have Advised that they May Seek Removal of the Site Specific Policy for Buttonville

In discussions with Regional Planning staff, they have recently advised us that, if the Buttonville Lands are re-designated as Employment, that will be the exclusively permitted use. As a result, staff will seek to remove the existing site specific policy for a mix of uses including a majority as business park, as well as residential and commercial uses not traditionally permitted in Employment. This is said to be based on provincial advice that the site specific policy is not consistent with an employment designation.

This news was understandably very alarming to our client, who had good reason to expect the existing planning permissions to be respected and continued. Such an aggressive step being taken by York Region would be particularly unfair, as it would be taken in the context of the Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review Official Plan exercise - putting that decision beyond the reach of any appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

We respectfully submit that the best way in which to respond to the provincial concern is simply to refrain from changing the designation to Employment, and leave the historically established site specific policy in place to govern the planning of the site. By simply leaving existing policy in place, no inconsistency in policy would arise that needs to be addressed.

**September 15, 2020**

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Markham Council Objects to any Policy Change that Would Remove or Limit the Existing Policy

At a Council meeting on September 15, 2020, Council for the City of Markham adopted a resolution that the existing policy in the Regional Official Plan should be maintained, and not limited by any changes through the Region's current Official Plan Review process. They wish to see the existing site specific policy, and the range of uses it contemplates including residential, continue to have application to the Buttonville lands.

The best way to ensure the site specific policy continues to have application is to leave it in place, and to not designate the Buttonville lands as Employment.

Conclusion

Based on the City of Markham Council endorsed Planning Report, the Region of York planning policy specific to the Buttonville lands, and the decision of the Province to remove Buttonville from its Provincially Significant Employment Zone Designation, it is clear that a new Regional designation of the lands as Employment is not appropriate. The lengthy history of planning on site, contemplating a mix of uses including residential and job-creating uses, should be continued.

Yours truly,

AIRD & BERLIS LLP



Hon. Peter Van Loan

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